

Use of face masks/face coverings

in babies and children – guidance

It has been brought to our attention in Public Health of the dangers of new 'cute' face masks being promoted for babies. It appears that some face coverings are being described as 'baby masks' or 'cute masks' and we have concerns over the safety of them.

This short document summarises the guidance on the use of masks in babies and children (as of 22nd July)

What is the guidance on the use of masks in babies and children?

Government guidelines in England are that children under 3 years should not wear a mask. There are risks associated with babies and small children wearing masks that may increase the risk of suffocation and other hazards.

Children under 11 years old are exempt from guidelines on the use of face coverings in shops and public transport. Where children choose to wear a face covering it should be under the supervision of adult at all times.

Additional information:

Babies and COVID

- Babies and small children are unable to communicate effectively if they are having trouble breathing.
- Concerns regarding isolation and care for a baby/young child with COVID-19 should be answered with the guidance from the NHS and not by the use of a face covering: There are simple guidelines from the NHS for looking after newborns if either you or baby show symptoms:
 - Continue to breastfeed your baby if you are doing so
 - It is important that you continue to follow safer sleep advice to lower the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
 - If you show symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) try not to cough or sneeze on your baby. Make sure they are in their own separate sleep space such as a cot or Moses basket
 - If your baby is unwell with a cold or fever don't be tempted to wrap them up more than usual. Babies need fewer layers to lower their body temperature.

Reducing the risk of Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

- The Lullaby Trust along with others have raised concerns over the use of face coverings in babies highlighting the suffocation risk associated with them. Using a mask in a small infant may increase the risk of Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
 - Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is rare however we can reduce the risk as much as possible by following these tips:
- Place your baby on their back to sleep, in a cot in the same room as you, for the first 6 months.
- Don't smoke during pregnancy or breastfeeding, and don't let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby.
- Don't share a bed with your baby if you have been drinking alcohol, if you take drugs, or you're a smoker.
- Never sleep with your baby on a sofa or armchair.
- Don't let your baby get too hot or cold.
- Keep your baby's head uncovered. Their blanket should be tucked in no higher than their shoulders.
- Place your baby in the "feet to foot" position, with their feet at the end of the cot or moses basket.