

# Masks unsafe for children under two

## Experts: Use of face coverings on young kids carries risk of suffocation



Possible safety hazard: Health experts urge caution on the use of face coverings for young children, especially those under two years of age.

By ASHLEY TANG  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Face masks should not be worn by children under the age of two as it may cause suffocation, say health experts.

National Early Childhood Intervention Council adviser and senior consultant paediatrician Datuk Dr Amar Singh HSS said the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated that face masks should not be used by such young children.

He said any child who was unable to relate their discomfort should not wear a face mask.

"Using a mask on a young child may increase the risk of suffocation. Children aged two to four are not likely to keep the mask on and will likely try to remove it, as well as touch their face more, so it is not helpful," he said.

Dr Amar noted that there was at present no clear-cut solution to protect young children from Covid-19 transmission.

He said the key was for adults and older children who are near the young ones to "act by wearing face masks".

Dr Amar explained that being unable to wear a face mask correctly was more harmful than not wearing one.

"Not wearing a face mask properly is a little bit more risky than wearing one, when you keep touching it. It may be harmful. Among children, we need to choose carefully who wears a mask," he said.

The American Academy of Paediatrics stated on its website, Healthy Children, that children under the age of two should not wear cloth face coverings.

Covid-19  
**Road to recovery**

#DigitalReady

greenpacket kiple  
ready.greenpacket.com

It noted that kids need not wear face masks when at home or out of doors, as long as they kept at least two metres away from others and avoided touching surfaces.

The advisory also cautioned parents to reconsider the use of cloth face coverings if they were a possible choking or strangulation hazard, and if wearing one could cause kids to touch their faces more frequently.

It added that the best way to protect a child was by him or her staying home and practising social distancing.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist and biostatistician Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman also agreed that children under the age of two should not wear masks.

She suggested that older kids wear a fabric face mask or three-ply mask – if it can be well fitted.

To ensure that children put on their face mask, Dr Malina said cooperation from parents and teachers was crucial.

"In my opinion, this matter is not really an issue for the adolescent group but for younger children. My suggestion is to follow the Education Ministry's SOP.

"The wearing of masks is only necessary if a person is not well, unhealthy, or has symptoms of respiratory infection," she said.