

COVID-19 Sensory Tips

Choosing a Mask

When picking out a face mask, there are many options. Find what works for you!



If you don't like how your mask feels on your ears, look at a mask extender or attaching your mask to a hat or headband. Try a neck gaiter or bandana instead.





Wearing a Mask

The Autism Society of Minnesota has a great social story about mask-wearing. Find it here: [AUSM Mask Wearing Social Story](#).

Remember to wash your hands before and after you put your mask on.

Wearing a mask can make it hard to read people's non-verbal cues and facial expressions. Here are some tips:

- Summarize what you heard.
- Ask them to repeat themselves.
- Confirm how they are feeling: "It sounds like you are mad. Is that right?"
- Ask a question if you aren't sure: "What are you trying to tell me?"
- Don't be offended if someone asks you to repeat yourself.
- Expect some misunderstandings. Be patient and forgiving.
- Before you meet someone in person with a mask on, ask to see their mask virtually first. Try this with your advisor before you return to campus!

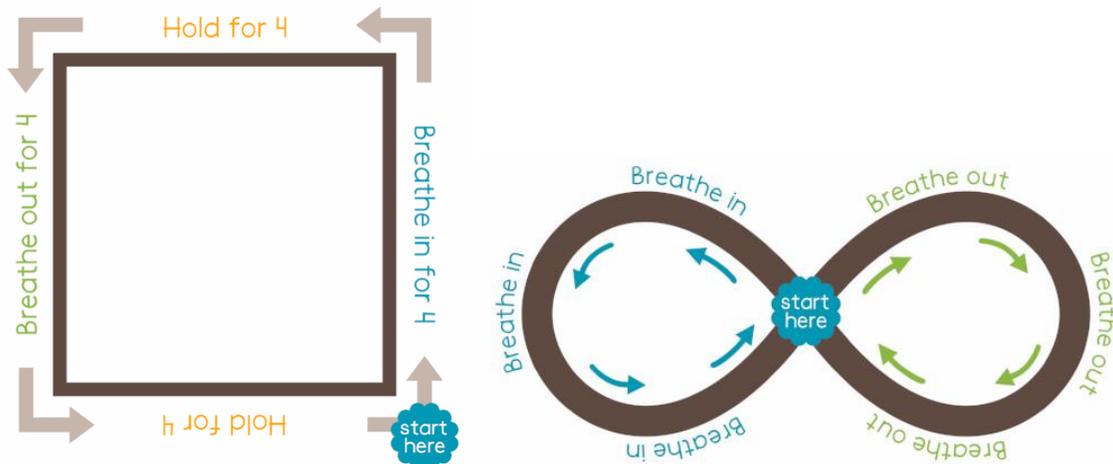
Sometimes wearing a mask can trigger sensory overload. What can you do?

- Be kind to yourself. Your normal capacity to handle life and do tasks is reduced with all the new COVID-19 information you have to think about.
- Reduce other tasks you need to do that day.
- Talk less when wearing a mask.
- Check in with yourself often about how you are feeling.
- Advocate that other people give you more time to think or act.
- Advocate that other people be understanding if you aren't as thorough or accurate in some of your tasks as you typically might be.

Breathing in a Mask

A face mask must cover your nose and mouth. Sometimes, this can make breathing feel hard or different. Try these strategies:

- **Use a timer** to practice wearing your mask just a few minutes at a time.
- **Do something fun** while you practicing wearing a mask – watch your favorite video or play a fun game. Make wearing a mask enjoyable!
- **Try square breathing or figure 8 breathing** before you put your mask on.



- **Sing a song** or make long sounds like “ahhhhh” to remind your brain to breathe deep before putting a mask on.
- **Take breathing breaks** when wearing a mask.
- **Practice talking with a mask** by talking like a robot – in a low, slow voice.
- **Communicate** honestly: “I feel like I can’t breathe.” “I need help.”

Hand Cleanliness

There are many options for keeping your hands clean, depending on what you prefer. Some people have texture or scent sensitivities.

With any of these options, it is very important that you still wash hands before/after eating and after using the toilet. It is also critical that you avoid touching your face as much as possible.

Option	Disposable Gloves 	Winter Gloves 	Sanitizing Wipes 	Hand Sanitizer 	Soap and Water 
Pro	Lightweight. Easy to wear.	Familiar. Already have them.	Can pick up items and sanitize them at the same time.	Cheap. Easy to take anywhere.	Lots of choices – liquid, bar, different scents.
Con	Sweaty. Need to buy a lot.	Harder to do tasks while wearing them.	Need to buy a lot. Chemicals can irritate skin.	Texture bothers some people.	Water and sinks aren't always available.