

# Pediatricians Remove Info on Mask Risks, Dangers for Kids

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › To support the unsubstantiated long-term use of masks, the AAP declared masks do not impact infant and child brain health and development and subsequently removed years of data and education that said children need facial cues
- › They support the use of masks in children suggesting "... when one sense is taken away, the others may be heightened." However, speech therapists, physicians and parents heartedly disagree
- › Masking has also had a significant impact on people learning to speak English or who are hearing impaired
- › The AAP stated there are no studies to support the concern that child development would be impeded by constant masking, yet random controlled studies to analyze the effect would never have passed an ethical review board
- › Masking removes infants' and young children's ability to read facial expressions, which can raise levels of anxiety and interfere with emotion recognition and trust building

Throughout 2020 and 2021, ever since the declared COVID-19 pandemic, government officials consistently have been inconsistent in their assessments and recommendations for public health. In August 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) joined the ranks when they endorsed the CDC's recommendation for masking.<sup>1</sup>

Since they did not want to be seen holding inconsistent positions, they removed years of information from their website that explained the importance of facial cues to early brain and child development. The removal of the content culminated August 12, 2021, with the fourth in a series of tweets, in which they said:<sup>2</sup>

*"Babies and young children study faces, so you may worry that having masked caregivers would harm children's language development. There are no studies to support this concern. Young children will use other clues like gestures and tone of voice."*

At the end of the tweet, they provided a link to an article on [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)<sup>3</sup> that suggested "... when one sense is taken away, the others may be heightened." The series of tweets was aimed at masking in general, stating:<sup>4</sup>

- Masks work to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among children
- Masks are a vital part of keeping kids safe at school this fall
- Masks do not compromise children's breathing
- Being around adults wearing masks doesn't delay babies' speech or language development

Experts argue over the efficacy and necessity of masking a population that has minimal risk from the virus. You need look no further than the CDC's website,<sup>5</sup> which shows that children ages birth to 17 had a death rate of 0.08% in 2021 and 0.05% in 2020. Yet, it was the final statement – that masking doesn't affect children's development – that unleashed a reaction on Twitter from parents, speech therapists and physicians who heartedly disagreed.

## **American Academy of Pediatrics Caught in a Quandary**

To support the unsubstantiated long-term use of masks, the AAP turned their back on years of research and their own information on the importance of facial cues with infants to protect and promote brain growth and development.

To make this work, the organization has taken down significant sections from their website about early childhood development. Reuters<sup>6</sup> asked why the content was removed the weekend after the tweets were published. They were told the content was in the process of being migrated to a different platform.

A spokesperson told Reuters, "The AAP can confirm that our web content migration has nothing to do with AAP's mask guidance."<sup>7</sup> They assured Reuters the content would be republished, but were unsure about the timeline; they expect it to be complete by the end of the year.

In other words, this well-funded and organized group is coincidentally "migrating" one key section of web content that curiously contradicts their new mask guidance, and planned this so it would take months to complete.

According to Reuters,<sup>8</sup> any links to this content that come up in the search engine are now redirected to the AAP's homepage. However, not all the content has been deleted since other organizations use the AAP documents to educate their clients.

For example, the "Building 'Piece' of Mind" pdf that was pulled as a resource on the AAP website<sup>9</sup> is available on the Ohio Bold Beginning! site and branded with the Ohio chapter of the AAP.<sup>10</sup> You can also download the full document from an Internet archive.<sup>11</sup>

The now "migrated" document encourages parents to pay attention to their emotional responses to their children, since "Feelings are a language that your infant understands early in life."<sup>12</sup> Yet, without facial cues, it's challenging for adults, much less children, to read and understand emotional reactions. In the migrated document, the AAP says:

*"As your baby grows, social smiles lead to conversations. For example: When you smile, your infant will smile back ... This 'dance' between you and your baby is fun for both of you. It is a great way to encourage your baby's new skills as they appear. For this important dance to work, calmly and consistently meet your baby's needs ... and smile!"*

But how is that supposed to work if your baby is staring at you and other adults who have two-thirds of their faces covered with masks? How do babies know you're smiling

if your entire face is covered up? In response to the AAP, Dr. James Todaro, who runs the website [MedicineUncensored](#), tweeted:<sup>13</sup>

*“AAP in 2018: 'How Do Infants Learn? Infants love to look at you and hear your voice. In fact, faces, with all their expressions, usually are more interesting than toys. Spend time talking, singing, and laughing. Play games of touching, stroking, and peek-a-boo.'”*

*“AAP in 2021: 'Babies and young children study faces, so you may worry that having masked caregivers would harm children’s language development. There are no studies to support this concern. Young children will use other clues like gestures and tone of voice.’”*

## **Did Pfizer’s Funding of the AAP Influence Their Mask Policy?**

Shortly after the AAP took down their facial cue documents and posted their new masking recommendations for children, a retired chief of police questioned the AAP’s motives – and in a telling opinion piece for [Law Enforcement Today](#),<sup>14</sup> he revealed that Pfizer is one of the AAP’s largest funders.

Twitter users<sup>15</sup> noticed it too, with several asking what would Pfizer’s funding have to do with the AAP’s mask recommendations. Finally, one person figured it out, saying, “perhaps the plan is to get parents so fed up with their children having to wear them they break down and get them the vax.”

In fact, the AAP itself linked vaccination to mandatory mask-wearing quite clearly when they talked with [NBC news](#),<sup>16</sup> which reported: “The AAP said universal masking is necessary because much of the student population is not vaccinated, and it’s hard for schools to determine who is as new variants emerge that might spread more easily among children.”

When you consider that another COVID vaccine maker, Johnson & Johnson, is also a funder for the AAP – and that Dr. Anthony Fauci made the news September 9, 2021,<sup>17</sup> saying that vaccines for children as young as 6 months may be ready as soon as

November 2021 – the idea that the AAP would consider setting the stage for parents to come begging for a vaccine doesn't sound so off the wall.

## **Not Just Children Are Affected**

An AAP staffer was quoted in Live From Studio 6B,<sup>18</sup> saying, "AAP recommends masks in schools and public settings to protect children. These documents are more about interactions between infants and their parents or primary caregiver, much of which will be in a home setting where masks are usually not needed."

However, masking facial cues affects infants and young children in day care situations and when they are out of their home. This impacts "social referencing," which the AAP finds important to child development and refers to the ability to read the face of a stranger.<sup>19</sup>

Research<sup>20</sup> shows mothers have unique central nervous system responses when they first see the face of their newborn. This demonstrates the significance of facial cues in building mother-infant bonding. Yet, as comments on a Twitter thread point out, infants and children are not the only ones suffering from a lack of facial cues. Twitter user MDaly is a mother and teacher, who commented:<sup>21</sup>

*"I teach English to students who are not native English speakers. Wearing a mask absolutely affected their language development last year. I had to ask students to repeatedly speak up and repeat themselves which negatively affects their self-esteem as well."*

A letter to the editor in The BMJ<sup>22</sup> expounds on the challenges faced by adults who are hearing impaired with mandatory masking. Health care has always been challenging for those with hearing impairment, especially in emergency departments where the noise level is high. Alexandra Dumitru is hearing impaired and commented:<sup>23</sup>

*"Zero common sense. It's tragic what our health institutions have become. First the CDC, now this – even adults benefit from seeing a full face. As someone*

*hearing impaired masks have been a nightmare for me. Kids copy adults; they need to see mouths move.”*

## **Data Are Sparse for a Very Good Reason**

The AAP stated that there were no studies to support the concern that baby’s and young children’s development would be impeded by the constant use of masks in the adults who care for them. Yet, as one person on Twitter said, “If you don’t study something, you can say there are no studies.”<sup>24</sup>

However, the data are sparse and there are no studies analyzing the effect of masking on young children because before 2020 it would never have passed an ethical review board. Imagine gathering a cohort of 40 infants. Nearly from the time of birth 20 parents would wear masks anytime they had interactions with their children. The other 20 would serve as a control group, being raised in a way formerly advised by the AAP.

After five years of what could only be called abusive behavior, psychiatrists and behavior psychologists would test these children to find their brain development, language development and ability to recognize facial cues are stunted. And yet, the AAP would like us to believe that won’t happen – without testing infant development in an environment known to be detrimental, we cannot extrapolate the information and understand it would be detrimental.

In 1990, the world discovered a carefully guarded secret of the Romanian Communist Party’s leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu.<sup>25</sup> After his execution the new government brought in Western psychologists and child specialists to help deal with the 170,000 children who were abandoned in orphanages where they received no interaction with adults.

Charles A. Nelson III, a professor of pediatrics and neuroscience at Harvard Medical School and Boston Children’s Hospital, recounts his introduction to the environment these children lived in. He recalled:<sup>26</sup>

*“I walked into an institution in Bucharest one afternoon, and there was a small child standing there sobbing. He was heartbroken and had wet his pants. I*

*asked, 'What's going on with that child?' A worker said, 'Well, his mother abandoned him this morning and he's been like that all day.' That was it. No one comforted the little boy or picked him up. That was my introduction."*

The children in the orphanages of Romania not only didn't have "face time" with their caregivers, but also didn't have any comfort or interaction. It's not hard to imagine how an infant, who relies on cues from other people to learn and grow, could be stunted by having little exposure to facial expressions.

## **The Still Face Experiment**

The horrific environment these children and young adults lived in was the largest human experiment in which children did not receive interaction from other humans. Until, that is, 2020 and 2021, when many infants and children are being raised in an environment where they are unable to read facial cues. In this short video, you'll see what happens during the "still face" experiment when the infant does not get a response from the mother.

The still face experiment demonstrated how infants are vulnerable to the emotional or nonemotional reactions of people. In the COVID-19 pandemic, infants and children are lacking visual facial cues, but the expectation is they continue to receive emotional interaction at the same level they did before the mask mandates.

Research has demonstrated that when parents struggle to be emotionally present with their children, the children grow up having more trouble with trust and regulating their own emotions.<sup>27</sup> However, there has been no data before 2020 to determine if masking facial cues would cause children to grow up with the same issues.

## **Are Facial Cues Recognizable Through Masks?**

Research produced after 2020 has demonstrated that children and adults struggle to recognize emotion in people who are masked. How this will affect overall child

development and whether the children can “catch up” if mask mandates are ever removed, is yet to be determined.

For example, in one study<sup>28</sup> published by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in December 2020, researchers engaged children ages 7 to 13 and showed them photos of people exhibiting six different emotions. Without the masks, the children identified the emotions correctly 66% of the time.<sup>29</sup>

However, when masks were in place, this dropped to between 18% and 28% for sadness, fear and anger. A second study<sup>30</sup> in children ages 3 to 5 years demonstrated that the younger children had even more difficulty.

The data were in line with past literature that confirmed that a face mask affected understanding emotions. They found the toddlers' performance was more influenced by a mask than older children and adults.<sup>31</sup>

Similar studies have also been performed with adults. One study<sup>32</sup> published in September 2020 with 41 healthy adults aged 18 to 87 years presented the participants with photos of six different expressions.

When the photos were not wearing masks, the overall performance for identifying emotions was 89.5%. This dropped significantly when masks were in place. A second study<sup>33</sup> published in Scientific Reports in 2021, analyzed the effects of masking to measure emotion recognition and trust attribution in 122 adult men and women.

The researchers found that standard masks interfered with both measures and made it more difficult to identify an individual they had already encountered when the mask was removed.

Data produced since 2020 have shown that masks do an excellent job of masking a person's ability to read emotions, but likely do not have the same efficacy in slowing the spread of a virus. The question we therefore must ask is, what will be the long-term effect on the emotional and mental health of society as the generation of children raised without full exposure to facial cues become doctors, lawyers, businesspeople and politicians?



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