[Date]

**To our Parents, Caregivers and Patients:**

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues in our community and across the nation, the pediatricians at XXX continue to be here to care for your family.  We follow the most current recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and we will continue to use guidance from these organizations for the care of your children during the pandemic.

The CDC and the AAP both recommend a return to in-person learning this fall for students with strict safety measures in place. Many pediatricians and specialists advise education leaders on best practice safety measures so schools are ready to welcome children. These safety measures include social distancing, increased hand hygiene, limiting class size, forgoing the use of “common” areas such as cafeterias, and masking of students and teachers.

When it comes to mask/face coverings, data clearly shows that the wearing of face coverings can slow the spread of Covid-19 (also referred to as Coronavirus) which is why it is such an important part of the safety measures for schools this fall.  The CDC and AAP recommend that anyone 2 years of age and older wear a mask / face covering.  As pediatricians, we strongly believe in this recommendation, and therefore, will not be writing exemption letters or signing exemption forms for children to be exempt from wearing a mask / face covering.  If your child has a diagnosed developmental disability or other medical condition that would prevent them from being able to remove a face mask in an emergent situation, please speak directly with your child’s primary pediatrician to discuss further.  Our pediatric specialists have reaffirmed the utmost importance of wearing a mask or face covering especially in children with underlying asthma or other lung issues.  If a child complains of increased asthma symptoms such as difficulty breathing, please contact your primary care pediatrician or specialist.

If your child has difficulty wearing a mask, here are a few suggestions to help them become accustomed to wearing a mask:

* Try different masks, including different styles (pleated, duck bill, ear loop, bandana) and fabrics as approved by your school.
* Practice wearing a mask at home; start with short periods of time, even a few minutes at first, and gradually increase.
* Offer your child stickers or small rewards for keeping their mask on.
* If your child has known significant sensory issues, work with his/her occupational therapist (OT) now to prepare for possibly wearing a mask at school.
* If your child has anxiety, work with his/her therapist now to prepare for wearing a mask at school.
* Be a good role model. If your child sees you wearing a mask comfortably without complaining, they are more likely to accept it.
* Be patient and keep working on it. Masks will likely be recommended for a long time, so putting effort in now to get used to them will make things easier in the coming months.
* If permitted by the child’s school, allow your child to help choose a mask they like so they will be excited about wearing it. Choose some with familiar characters on it or in your child’s favorite color.
* Have a positive attitude when discussing it with your child. You can use statements like “Isn’t it great that we can wear these masks to help keep us all safer when we are around other people.” or “Just like washing our hands, masks help us to not spread germs”

Sincerely,

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