

## **Communication Tips for Hearing People Wearing Masks**

Due to the Corona virus outbreak, many people are wearing face masks. Research has shown that face masks and face shields muffle speech and can reduce the clarity of certain speech sounds. Wearing face masks also eliminates the ability to lip-read. This can cause difficulties in communication and increased listening effort. Following the tips below may help to reduce these difficulties.

- Ask the person you are speaking to, to reduce the background noise as much as possible or move to a quieter location.
- Ask them to talk slowly and not shout.
- Make sure you wear your hearing aid, check the battery is working and the tubing is clean.
- Use a white board/Notebook to write messages down.
- It is possible to purchase remote microphones and communicators. These can be purchased from companies, such as, Connevans at [www.connevans.co.uk](http://www.connevans.co.uk).
- If you don't have a hearing aid but need one, you can download a hearing aid app to your mobile phone that can provide amplification to improve speech understanding, such as, Petralex or Ear Machine apps.
- BSL Health Access is the name of a free British Sign Language Interpreter service online at: <https://www.bslhealthaccess.co.uk/>
- Video calls offer face to face communication and applications such as Microsoft Teams have tools such as automatically generated live subtitles.
- If you have a smartphone app that allows you to adjust your hearing aids, you may be able to alter the bass and treble which may help with clarity of speech.
- It is possible to use an app that translates speech into text in real-time. Examples of such apps are; Google Live Transcribe or Otter, which can convert speech to text on a tablet or smart phone.
- Prepare digital flashcard apps (or paper index cards) with information and phrases that can help to minimise unexpected questions or comments. Apps such as BuzzCards, Cardzilla or Big Note. An example phrase could be, "I read lips and cannot see your mouth. Please speak in the direction of my phone so the app can transcribe your speech."

It is important to remember that you are not alone. Face masks create difficulties in communication for everybody, including people with normal hearing too.

**If you have tried various solutions and are still struggling, please contact Audiology on 01244 363020 to discuss the options regarding your hearing aids.**



## Tips for Wearing a Mask with Hearing Aids



If you wear hearing aids, you may have difficulty wearing a protective mask around your ears. Here are some simple solutions to get the elastic off your ears.



If you have a mask that goes around the head instead of over the ears, this is the simplest solution.



If your hair can be put in a bun, wrap the mask's elastic around the bun.



Sew two buttons onto a piece of ribbon to wear on the back of your head. Attach the mask's elastic to the buttons.



Sew two buttons onto a fabric headband above your ears and hook the mask's elastic onto the buttons.

Take care not to dislodge your hearing aids when removing your face mask. Never yank the mask off, instead carefully hold the hearing aid with one hand whilst removing the mask with the other, or take your hearing aids out first, then remove the mask.

Secure hearing aids using a glasses strap or OtoClips (pinned or clipped to clothing on one end and the other end hooked onto the hearing aid). Adhesives such as wig/body tape might help to secure hearing aids as well