Best Practices for People with Hearing Loss During Covid: Face Masks

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Carolyn Ginsburg Stern
Assistant Director of Outreach and Strategic Initiatives
Objectives

Mastering Masks with a Hearing Loss

- Why mask wearing is challenging

- Offer a range of solutions to make interactions a bit easier

- Practical ways allies can be supportive

- Q & A
Introduction to CHC

Center for Hearing and Communication is a leader in hearing health care since 1910

- Audiology
- Emotional Health and Wellness
- Speech and Communication
- Technical Services

- Telehealth – Remote Servicing
- Tinnitus Therapy

www.chchearing.org/blog/
Challenges
Hearing Loss and Mask Wearing

● Visual

● Acoustic
  ○ “low pass filter”
  ○ limits high pitched sounds
  ○ impairs ability to hear speech

● Disrupts our communication and connecting with others

Requires different strategies and new habits
Clear Masks

- Useful, but needs wider adoption
- Limited inventory (FDA approved)
- Homemade patterns
- Fogging concerns

SPREAD AWARENESS
Clear Masks and Shields

Instashield

The Leaf

Badger Shield+

Humanity Shield

HelloMask
Wearing Masks with Hearing Devices

- **Secure hearing aids**
  - Eyeglass straps
  - Double Sided Tape
  - Otoclip
  - Cloth headband

- “Find my hearing aid or CI” feature
Types of Masks
Wearing with hearing devices

- **Tie-back style**
  - extend ties
  - pull up and tie on top of head

- **Elastic band style**
  - pull off ears and clip at top of head or below neck
  - connect the two bands
    - barrette, velcro strip, paper clip, ear saver
    - cloth headband with buttons
    - secure to baseball cap, hair bun
Communication Strategies
When Masks are Worn

For the person with a hearing loss

● Prepare in advance

● Self-disclose your hearing loss

● Seek quiet background, good lighting

● Anticipate questions and vocabulary

● Observe eyes and non-verbal cues

● Explain how the person can help you

● Share what you heard
Communication Strategies
When Masks are Worn

For the speaker interacting with a person with hearing loss

- Patience
- Ask how you can assist
- Arrange for CART or Sign-language Interpreter
- Speak up or write it down
- Re-phrase if already repeated twice
- Gesture, Cue in the topic, be creative
- Speak directly vs. to the spouse, child or friend

- Maintain social distance and remove mask if facing difficulty (CDC recommendation)
Facilitate Communication When Masks are Worn

- Pen and paper, portable white board, text message
- Talk to text apps
  - Otter
  - Ava
  - Microsoft Translator
  - Google Live Transcribe
  - iPhone “Notes”
- Plug in or Bluetooth Mic
- Digital or paper index cards
  - Buzz Cards, Cardzilla, BigNote

- Consider conducting session remotely with VRI or captioning service
Improve Hearing Ability
When Masks are Worn

- Adjust hearing device volume
- Explore a hearing device program to use when masks are worn
- Assistive listening devices
  - Roger Select
  - Roger Pen
  - Pocket Talker
- Smartphone apps/features
  - Sound Amplifier
  - Apple Live Listen
  - Airpod Pros
- Discuss with an audiologist
Emotional Care
Hearing Loss and Masks

- Range of emotions
  - anxiety, stress, isolation, fear
- Do not over schedule
- Seek counseling and support
Check List
Hearing Loss and Masks

- Prepare ahead
- Can this be discussed in advance?
- Is an accommodation needed?
- What messages need to be communicated?
- What items do I need with me?
- What is my mood and energy level today?
- How did it go?
Q & A

Thank you

cgstern@chchearing.org

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