

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

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# 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/](http://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



Communicator Mask  
FDA Approved

ClearMask



Handmade  
Mask

**SPREAD AWARENESS**

# Clear Masks and Shields

**Instashield**



**The Leaf**



**Humanity Shield**



**Badger Shield+**



**HelloMask**

## Wearing Masks with Hearing Devices

- **Secure hearing aids**

- Eyeglass straps
- Double Sided Tape
- Otoplasty
- Cloth headband



- **“Find my hearing aid or CI” feature**

# Types of Masks

## Wearing with hearing devices

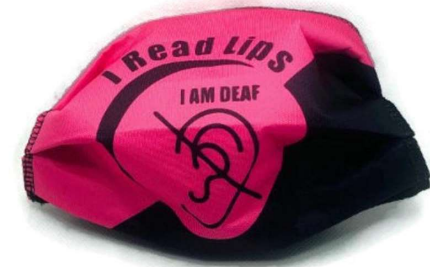
- **Tie-back style**
  - extend ties
  - pull up and tie on top of head
  
- **Elastic band style**
  - pull off ears and clip at top of head or below neck
  - connect the two bands
    - barrette, velcro strip, paper clip, ear saver
    - cloth headband with buttons
    - secure to baseball cap, hair 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
- Smartphone apps/features
- Discuss with an audiologist



Roger Select



Roger Pen



Pocket Talker



Sound Amplifier



Apple Live Listen



Airpod Pros

# 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



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