

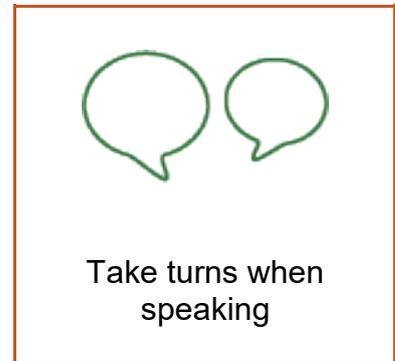
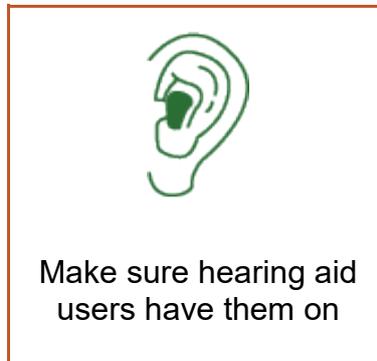
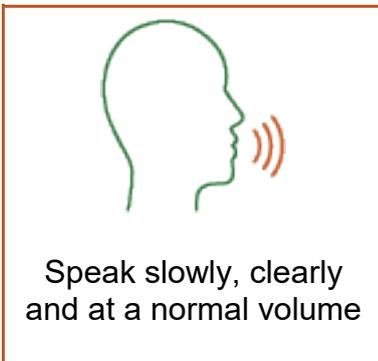


Face Mask Tips for People with Hearing Loss

The recent rise in community transmission of COVID-19 in some parts of Australia means some states and territories now recommend or require the use of protective face masks. It's important to stay up to date with the advice in your local area about wearing face masks. You can find out the latest information and recommendations through your local state or territory health government website.

The Hearing Services Program (the program) recognises face masks can pose additional challenges, particularly for those with hearing loss. For people who wear a hearing device or devices, the ear loops of traditional face masks may cause complications. The ear loops can tug on the hearing aids and cause other problems. People with hearing loss may also face challenges communicating with others who are wearing a face mask, as they ordinarily rely on lip-reading to understand.

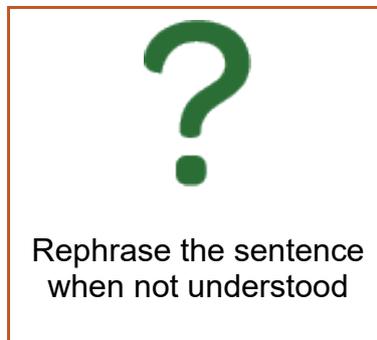
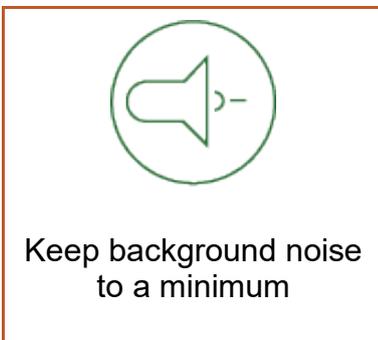
The program has produced this factsheet to provide some useful tips to make the process of wearing, and communicating while wearing, a face mask more comfortable.



Tips for communicating with a person with hearing loss

Be patient

Remember, communication for anyone with a hearing loss is already more difficult. This difficulty in communicating increases when a mask interferes with the ability to lip-read. If possible, consider using a mask that has a transparent window/shield included so those with a hearing loss can still lip-read in their interactions provided it still gives adequate coverage. Other useful tactics include





Consider alternatives

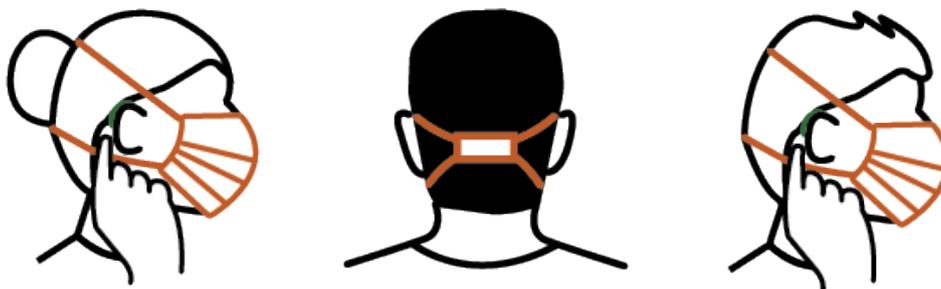
If you are having difficulties communicating as a result of mask use, you could also consider

- Writing down the message and keeping common messages on a flashcard
- Using a translation app on a smartphone or tablet device

Tips for wearing face masks with hearing devices

Be gentle

When putting on, or removing a face mask, slow and steady wins the race. Be careful not to pull on mask straps, as this increases the likelihood of accidentally removing your hearing device.



Fabric straps

If possible, wear a mask with fabric ties rather than elastic. You can loosen and customise fabric ties to suit your preferences. This will reduce interference with hearing devices.

Extend your mask / Use a mask holder

If your mask straps do not fit comfortably – extend them. For example, a simple solution might be to extend mask straps by adding additional length via a hair-tie, or a shoelace. You can also wear a mask holder near the back of the head. It holds ear loops and removes a source of interference with hearing devices and eyeglasses.

Follow official advice

Federal and State Governments provide up-to-date guidance for your area – please ensure that you understand, and comply with any restrictions in place.

For example, the [Victorian Department of Health and Human Services](#) advises:

Q. Can I take my face covering off if someone I am communicating with can't hear me?

A. You can remove your face covering if you are communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing. This should be done only where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

You should maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres. If you need to cough or sneeze, do so into a tissue (immediately disposing of it) or your elbow (then clean it of secretions).



Hearing Services Program

Official Links

Department of Health – Covid

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

Local, State and Territory Health Departments

<https://www.health.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/local-state-and-territory-health-departments>

Useful Links

(external link)

<https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/australians-manage-face-mask-challenges/>

(external link)

<https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/8079-2/>