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**Accessibility for Hard of Hearing Persons During the Coronavirus Pandemic**

The coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented situation impacting on everyone. For people who have a hearing loss, the impact of social distancing and the common use of face masks has created additional challenges. Typically, we need to be in close proximity to others and to read their lips so that we can communicate effectively. The good news is that there are solutions to our challenges as listed below.

**Use of Face Masks**

* Guidelines on use of face masks have been developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and professional associations.

[The use of protective masks - WHO](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&amp;rct=j&amp;q&amp;esrc=s&amp;source=web&amp;cd=1&amp;cad=rja&amp;uact=8&amp;ved=2ahUKEwimx4yzyZ3oAhXBCOwKHb0xD68QFjAAegQIBxAB&amp;url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.who.int%2Fdocs%2Fdefault-source%2Fdocuments%2Fadvice-on-the-use-of-masks-2019-ncov.pdf&amp;usg=AOvVaw1wKKiVePB_EEnPve9ENU84)

[AEA Guidelines for Professional Hearing for COVID-19](https://www.aea-audio.org/portal/files/AEA%20Guideline%20for%20Professional%20Hearing%20Care%20during%20the%20COVID-19%20period%20v18_03_2020%20final.pdf)

* Transparent face masks are also available and information about suppliers is available on the website using the search words “transparent surgical masks”.

**Communication Alternatives**

* Speak at a moderate rate and repeat oneself if asked. Exercise patience during communication.
* Try text interpretation of speech through cellphone apps or pen and paper.
* Employ text messaging or video apps with the captioning feature enabled where personal interaction is not possible.
* Use assistive listening devices; the speaker uses a transmitter and the hard of hearing person wears a receiver. The device has a range that allows for social distancing.

**Captioning and Sign Language Interpreting for the Media**

* Caption TV news and social media as this is essential for many hard of hearing persons.
* Provide public messages with sign language interpreting which is the main means of communication for some deaf and hard of hearing persons.

**Kudos**

We thank our media, health care and allied workers and everyone for doing their part to create a safer community while attending to the communication access needs for those of us with a hearing loss.

The British Columbia Chapter of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is a non-profit organization of individuals who have a hearing loss. CHHA BC and its branches are self-help organizations committed to creating awareness of the nature of hearing loss, accessibility needs and strategies for enhancing better hearing.



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