

MASK TALKIN'

Here are some things to consider when speaking while wearing a mask.

SOME CHALLENGES

- No more lip reading
- Greatly reduced facial expressions
- Connecting with others
- Vocal and physical fatigue
- Distorted speech

1. "The physical barrier actually changes the sound waves that are reaching your ear," says UNC Health audiologist Patricia Johnson, AuD. "High pitches aren't able to make it through the material, so you start losing access to consonants, particularly 'f,' 's,' 'sh,' 'th,' which carry a lot of the weight in the clarity of the words that we hear. For example, "wish" may sound like "with."

SOME POINTERS

- **Body language/ gestures** - use your shoulders and more gestures including pointing or act it out- this will help clarify and give context
- **Facial expressions** - Continue to smile, use your eyebrows and make facial expressions; maybe even exaggerate them a bit - this will help to foster connection
- **Use Props** - can you hold something up or demonstrate?
- **Use phones, tablets, paper** - use the tools you have: draw, write, show
- **Don't shout** - this can distort speech more and you won't be able to sustain it
- **Speak directionally** - where your mouth is pointed is where the sound goes; so look where you want your voice to go and keep your hands away from your mouth
- **Slow down** - create more distance between your words; this will help with understanding
- **Ask more questions** - to check for understanding
- **Use more pauses** - while speaking; and be patient with yourself
- **Environment** - if possible limit the ambient noises
- **Increase your water intake**- you will find yourself more dehydrated so stay on top of this
- **Proper sleep** - never underestimate the importance of this
- And when possible follow Aaron Burr's advice, "**Talk Less, Smile More.**"

1. Johnson, Dr. Patricia 25 May 2020, *4 Tips for Communicating while Wearing a Mask*, UNC Health Talk, accessed 2 Sept. 2020 <<https://healthtalk.unchealthcare.org/4-tips-for-communicating-while-wearing-a-mask/>>

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