Hearing aids and using face coverings

This leaflet gives more information on using a face covering while wearing a hearing aid. If you have any more questions, please contact the adult audiology centre team.

You might be concerned about wearing face coverings and your hearing aids together. It is important to make sure that they do not cause you any more discomfort, or put you at a risk of accidentally losing your hearing aids. The tips below could help relieve some of your anxiety, so that you can still protect yourself and others.

Tips that might help when wearing a face covering with your hearing aid(s)

- Try to keep the elastic off of your ears. Using a mask that goes around your head will keep your hearing aids and the elastic separate. A mask with ties that go around your head, will also keep your ears free.
- If using a mask with elastic, you could use a mask extender to hold the ties off your ears. A mask extender can be made out of a paper clip, shoelace or ribbon. A headband or cap with 2 buttons sewn to the sides can help keep your hearing aids safe.
- If your hair can put in a bun, wrap the mask elastic around the bun. Tying up long hair will prevent your hearing aids getting caught in your hair and mask elastic.
- If you wear glasses, take them off before putting on your mask or taking it off.
- Remove the mask slowly while standing or sitting, checking your hearing aids are still in place as you remove one side at a time.
- You can remove your hearing aids before the mask. Make sure they are kept safely, ready to be re-inserted once the mask is off successfully.
- Ask a friend or family member to watch you remove your mask. If your hearing aid falls out they can help to see where it falls.
Do I have to wear a face covering?
You must follow the latest Government guidelines about wearing face coverings.

The Government have made some exemptions from wearing face coverings, but please check the website for more details.

The charity, Action on Hearing Loss, have created an exemption card you can choose to carry with you and show to people to make it easy to show your exemption without speaking. More information about the card can be found here, w: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/2020/06/face-coverings-for-the-general-public/

Are you struggling to hear others because of face coverings?
It may help you to plan ahead when going out. A quick checklist to make sure you are prepared might help you to feel less anxious.

What to take when going out:
- a face covering – and a spare face covering just in case.
- hand sanitiser
- a mobile phone – it might help you communicate with others using text or speech to text apps (such as Google Live Transcribe).
- pen and paper or small whiteboard (if you do not have a mobile phone)
- contactless payment card
- an assistive listening device, if you use one.

Sharing some basic deaf awareness tips may help you and others during this time. Action on Hearing Loss are working hard to break down the barriers that people with hearing impairments face. They are sharing knowledge on the increased challenges due to face coverings.

Deaf awareness tips for the general public
- Make sure you are facing the person you are talking to and speak clearly. Avoid shouting, speaking too fast or unnecessarily slow.
- If someone does not understand you, repeat what you said or phrase it differently, using plain language.
- If you are talking in a noisy place, move to a quieter area if possible.
- Use simple gestures such as pointing or waving.
- Write things down, text on a mobile device, or even a speech to text app.
- If someone asks you to, it can help to speak to their relative or friend.

Further sources of information

Action on Hearing Loss
w: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/coronavirus-response/

Hearing Link
w: www.hearinglink.org
Government

w: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Some information in this leaflet has been reproduced with kind permission from Action on Hearing Loss and Starkey Hearing Technologies.

Contact us
If you have any questions about your hearing or hearing aids, please contact us, The adult audiology centre, 3rd Floor, Southwark Wing, Guy’s Hospital, Great Maze Pond, London SE1 9RT,
t: 020 7188 2211, text phone: 0773 498 0844, e: audiologyappointments@gstt.nhs.uk

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
 t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111
This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. t: 111 w: www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website
This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust
Members of Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.
t: 0800 731 0319 e: members@gstt.nhs.uk w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Leaflet number: 5032/VER1
Date published: August 2020
Review date: December 2020
© 2020 Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust
A list of sources is available on request

Our values: Put patients first | Take pride in what we do | Respect others | Strive to be the best | Act with integrity