

## Patient information

# Communication tactics for everyone and for hearing loss

This leaflet provides some guidance on how to make communication easier for everyone. This is especially important when either you or someone you are speaking to has a hearing impairment.

### If you have a hearing impairment

- Don't stand too far away from the person speaking.
- Face the speaker and have the light on their face so that you can see their face and lips and watch for expressions and gestures.
- Ask people to get your attention first, before speaking to you.
- Ask the speaker to start the conversation with the subject at the beginning.
- Ask the speaker to slow down just a little and speak clearly.
- Don't be afraid to ask the speaker to rephrase or repeat.
- Be assertive and open. There is no need to be embarrassed about having a hearing impairment. Telling someone at the start of the conversation that you have a hearing impairment, and/or you lip read, can help with communication right from the beginning.
- Try to keep calm and don't panic. Getting flustered will make it more difficult to follow the conversation.

## **Speaking to someone with a hearing impairment**

- Attract the person's attention first, perhaps by waving or tapping them on the arm.
- Make sure you are not too far away from the person.
- Find somewhere with good lighting, and away from noise and distractions to speak.
- Ask the person if they need to lip read you, even if they have a hearing aid.
- Ensure the person knows the topic of the conversation.
- Turn your face towards the person so they are able to lip read.
- Speak clearly, not too slowly, and use normal lip movements, facial expressions and gestures.
- Keep your voice down; shouting looks aggressive and can be uncomfortable.
- Remove sunglasses, as these might prevent the person from seeing your expressions.
- Keep cups, cigarettes, hands or clothing away from your mouth as these may prevent lip reading.
- Use plain language.
- Rephrase rather than just repeating single words. Don't repeat the same thing over and over again; try to find another way to say the same thing.
- Make sure what you are saying is being understood.

## **Manipulate the environment**

- Always speak to others from the same room.
- Reduce background noise wherever possible or choose quiet surroundings.
- Soft furnishings, even using mats and tablecloths on a table, can reduce echo or harsh sounds in a room.

- Think about how the furniture is arranged in your lounge, office, or any other rooms where you will have conversations; consider whether a different arrangement might help with communication.
- If the hearing is better in one ear compared to the other then consider how you position yourself and others, to best aid communication.

## **Think positively, be patient, and be understanding**

- A little effort can ease frustrations for everyone.
- Communication is a two way process.
- Remember, hearing aids cannot restore normal hearing.
- A hearing impaired person may watch you closely as they are lip reading.

## **Acknowledgements**

'Communication tactics for everyone'. Audiology Department, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, February 2016.

'Communication tips for speaking to someone with hearing loss'. Action of Hearing Loss.

<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/~media/Files/Factsheets/Communication/pdf..>  
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'Communication Tips. Tips for hearing people'. Action on Hearing Loss.

<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/your-hearing/ways-of-communicating/communication-tips/tips-for-hearing-people.aspx> (08/12/2016)

'Communication Tips. Tips for people with hearing loss'. Action on Hearing Loss.

<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/your-hearing/ways-of-communicating/communication-tips/tips-for-people-with-hearing-loss.aspx> (08/12/2016)

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<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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