



*Join us for our regular meeting at the
North Shore Senior Center
161 Northfield Rd, Northfield, IL
10 am, 2nd Monday of the month in the
Lindon Lounge
www.hearinglosschicagonorthshore.com*

April 2020

Chicago North Shore Chapter Newsletter



The North Shore Senior Center, NSSC, is closed and has cancelled all on-site classes through at least May 29. The Chicago North Shore Chapter will resume weekly support groups and monthly meetings following the NSSC's reopening. Please check our website for schedule information at www.hearinglosschicagonorthshore.com.

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We are very grateful to these Sponsors for their generosity and support of HLAA Chicago North Shore Chapter. NOTE: if your name or business is not listed correctly, please let us know.



Don't forget, while doing your pandemic shopping be sure to use this link. The Chicago North Shore Chapter is on AmazonSmile and will benefit from your purchases.

smile.amazon.com/ch/27-3871624



How Do I Communicate with Doctors, nurses, and Staff at the Hospital During COVID-19?

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, how will you be able to talk to doctors, nurses and others at the hospital? Going to the hospital will be very different during the pandemic.

In normal times, hospitals must give services that help you understand what is being said and are supposed to ask you what services you need. This might include in-person sign language interpreters, Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), lip-reading, written communications, hand-held amplification devices, captioning or CART, or speech-to-text apps.

Now, during the pandemic, most hospitals are seeing a large number of patients and often cannot provide the same services. Many hospitals will not allow in-person interpreters, family members, or visitors to come into the hospital. You may be alone for a long time when you are in the hospital.

Most doctors and nurses in hospitals now wear masks and gloves and may talk to you from behind a window or curtain, so it may be harder for you to understand them.

You have the right to decide your care. This means you will need to know a few things and bring your own communication tools to the hospital during the pandemic.

7 Tips to Maintain Hearing Health Care Amid COVID-19

The Hearing Journal

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

By Shari Eberts

The world has changed a lot in the past few weeks. Physical distancing due to COVID-19 has closed restaurants, theaters, and many other "non-essential" businesses, prioritizing health care and access to food and medicines above all else. This has caused many of us to self-isolate, keeping our distance for our safety and that of others, to help flatten the curve of infections. For people with hearing loss, maintaining our hearing health and having access to working hearing aids and other communication devices are critical as we adapt to various ongoing—and often stressful—changes. Despite this challenging time, stay on top of your hearing health with these tips:

1. Take an inventory. Make sure you have plenty of hearing batteries on hand to keep your devices functioning for at least eight weeks. Replenish supplies online or ask your local pharmacy or supermarket to deliver some to your home. Many pharmacies are offering free delivery for prescription items; they may do the same for hearing aid batteries. Your audiologist may also have extras on hand they can send to you. Check out a subscription battery service for home delivery such as HearOClub.

2. Explore telehealth options. Call your audiologist about teleaudiology options, which are remote hearing care services using video conferencing technology in place of an in-person visit. Video calls are preferable to audio-only calls because they allow for lipreading. Skype, a free video calling service, provides live captions for all calls (captioning directions here: <https://bit.ly/2UbkmTA>). While the captioning quality can vary, it will help fill in some of the gaps you may miss. Call your insurance provider about your telehealth coverage, since Medicare, for example, has recently expanded its coverage for telehealth to help seniors during this public health emergency.

3. Utilize curbside, contact-less services if available. Check for drop-off and curbside services that your audiologists may be offering. If available, observe CDC guidance on physical distancing by staying in your car while the audiologist or a team member comes to pick up your device. If the repair is quick, wait in your car until the device is returned to you. For larger repairs, schedule a time for curbside pick-up of the repair at a later date. Don't hesitate to ask the audiology clinic about their

infection control strategies to make sure that devices are returned clean and ready for your use.

4. Stay as connected as possible. Speak to someone by phone or video chat each day or two to stay connected to friends and family. Speaking on the phone can be challenging for people with hearing loss, but many captioned phone options exist. Explore this list compiled by the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA): <https://bit.ly/3bk3MNJ>.

5. Experiment with a variety of communication tools. With more conversations moving to phone and video calls, and in-person chats taking place behind medical masks, you may need to use additional tools for communication. Try a speech-to-text app like Live Transcribe (only on Android), Otter, or Ava to create captions on demand. Other options like a Boogie Board or a small whiteboard work well for short messages. Paper and pen are also a good option.

6. Consider a backup hearing device. Should your hearing aids stop working, and you are unable to have them repaired, try a smartphone amplifier such as Ear Machine. This and similar apps allow you to use your smartphone and a pair of headphones to amplify sound in real-time. Consider an over-the-counter personal sound amplifier product (PSAP) or a pocket talker. These are not hearing aids but might be able to get you through a crisis. These options will work best for those with mild to moderate hearing loss and need a little hearing enhancement in specific situations.

7. Prepare a communication kit. If you need to seek additional medical attention, call ahead first. If you are told to visit the doctor, bring your hearing aids, extra batteries, chargers and any additional communication devices you have discovered from your experimentation activities. Create signs for you to wear or be displayed in your hospital room to remind medical personnel about your hearing loss. If safe to do so, bring a friend or loved one to assist. If you are hospitalized or for any medical visits, review HLAA's Guide for Effective Communication in Health Care (<https://bit.ly/3bmgKdM>)

The COVID-19 pandemic is making life more challenging for everyone. Prioritize your hearing health by staying in touch with your audiologist and other hearing health professionals. With flexibility,

creativity, and willingness to try new communication technology, we can protect our health without neglecting our hearing.



Meeting Platforms and Automatic Speech Recognition Options during the COVID-19 pandemic

From the Deaf and **Hard of Hearing** Technology Access Program at Gallaudet University.

Some tips for those trying to organize meetings: There are many considerations to the type of meetings you want to hold and what application you use. This guide will help you consider different factors involved with online meetings to determine your best option. Be patient with yourself, there will be a lot of trial and error. Practice helps you get better. From the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Technology Access Program at Gallaudet University: Accessibility Tips for a Better Zoom/Virtual Meeting Experience can be found at www.deafhhtech.org/lerc/accessible-virtual-meeting-tips/

Free Aid to Hearing

Your expensive hearing aids don't help a bit when a medical person, who is sitting facing a computer screen, is talking to you.

After his two hospitalizations in a month, just days before the COVID-19 outbreak, I realized something more had to be done to alert the constant stream of medical people of my husband's hearing loss. They had more on their minds than his hearing condition when entering his room. Yes, it was a free aid to hearing. "I am hard of hearing. Please face me when speaking" on a bright yellow card pinned to his hospital gown got their attention. The response to this note was very positive from all of the staff. The first reaction of one person was to shout, thinking he could hear better! This gave me a chance to tell her how shouting distorted the sound, is annoying and not helpful at all. Another nurse loved the sign and made a large pink one that she hung above his bed. Not one person noticed the sign above his bed.

This small bright yellow sign on his hospital gown got the attention of everyone who entered his room. While this sign is about the size of a name badge, it identified him as hard of hearing, which was way more important than his name. When he was sleeping, they pinned it to his pillow.

While there are other strategies to aid in communicating with a hard-of-hearing person, facing each other when speaking is so important. The speaker and the listener both have a responsibility when trying to communicate. Letting the speaker know you are hard of hearing is your responsibility. The fact that it is written on your chart is not enough.

This seems like a simple but effective step that hospitals could use to accommodate the growing number of patients with a hearing loss. Unfortunately, there is a greater concern for using a walker to prevent falls than there is for the patient to hear what is being said.

When you can't hear, the speaker doesn't know what you are not hearing. You must do everything you can to let them know you are hard of hearing.

Jeanne Wehman

I am hard of hearing

Please face me when speaking

Cut this out now so you are prepared should you need to be hospitalized. Once the Chapter returns to its normal schedule, a supply of these badges will be made available at Chapter meetings.



Are you experiencing delays with captioning on your caption phones?

To our valued **CAPTIONCALL** customers
April 6, 2020:

Once again, I want to update our valued CaptionCall customers during this coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. CaptionCall continues to hire more employees to keep up with the demand for increased communication from you, our valued customers. Over the last two weeks, CaptionCall hired more than 600 additional Captioning Agents. We are working as expeditiously as possible to allow more Captioning Agents to work from home, while simultaneously attempting to ensure social distancing and cleaning in our centers to make them safe for our employees to go to work. We acknowledge you will experience delays in captioning and sincerely apologize for those delays. Your patience is appreciated as we strive to improve

service levels by adding shifts, hiring and training more Captioning Agents, offering work-from-home options, and working with the FCC to ensure we can continue to provide service. I'm immensely proud of our organization and want to thank our many employees who have given their time, energy, commitment and talents in this time of crisis to serve you. Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay strong. Sincerely,
Jason Dunn, Chief Operating Officer

CapTel offered this in response to issues related to COVID-19.

We are working around the clock to provide support, particularly to people impacted by the current national health crisis. During this time, we are experiencing higher than normal call volumes and wait times. We encourage you to take advantage of alternative ways to reach us, including live online chat or by emailing your questions to captel@captel.com. This site also has helpful tips and answers to common questions. Thank you for your patience as we work to support everyone.

Customer Service
CapTel



The National HLAA convention for 2020 Has Been Cancelled.

One unfortunate fallout of this cancellation is that there will be no honoring **Chapter President Elaine McCaffrey, who was scheduled to be presented with the 2020 HLAA Community Service Award.** She was nominated by Liz Hupp, Betty Buino, Bindy Bitterman, and John McCaffrey, citing her tireless efforts to organize and build up our chapter's annual *Hospital Safety for People with Hearing Loss Panel* each October.



The HLAA Chicago North Shore Chapter runs on people power. Please don't let us run out of gas. More than just a social club and support group, we are advocates for the Hard-Of-Hearing community.

We have succeeded in getting hearing loops installed in churches, public spaces and entertainment venues. We influence State and Federal lawmaking. Our Chapter is recognized nationally for hosting hospital panels to educate staff in the special needs of HOH patients.

We are always alert for opportunities to have our voices heard. So, if you are ready to share your special talents, please contact any one of the committee members to get started.

The Chicago North Shore Chapter Steering Committee is currently using ZOOM meeting software to conduct business remotely and is refining the process for Chapter use. It can also be useful for small online gatherings such as family meetings.

Hearing Technology

Rated best in accessibility by *Wired* magazine is Israeli startup OrCam's new take on the hearing aid. Its Hear device, worn around the neck, uses cameras and machine intelligence to tell which person in a crowded room is talking to you. It pairs with your existing hearing aid or headphones, sending just the voice of your conversation partner to your ears. This solves a problem with traditional aids which have a hard time filtering background chatter from direct conversation—the so-called cocktail party effect. Price TBD.

www.orcam.com