

News Column for Use Week of 10/26/2020
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Communicating Clearly While Wearing a Face Covering

Wearing a face covering is an important part of keeping you and others healthy right now. But they can also make talking to those around you more difficult. Face coverings can muffle sound. They can also hide important clues about the speaker's message and emotions. This can make it hard to understand speech, especially for those with hearing loss.

Millions of people in the U.S. have hearing loss, including half of those older than 75. Now, more than ever it is important to make an extra effort to communicate. Speak more clearly and louder than you normally would, without shouting. Reduce background noise when possible. Be aware that physical distance can also make hearing more difficult.

Make sure the person you are speaking with understands you. Ask and adapt if needed. A person can also offer to use another method – a smartphone, paper and pen or whiteboard to get the message across. When it is essential that you understand spoken details like at a doctor's appointment, consider bringing a friend or family member to help.

Face coverings can make communication challenging for everyone. Some people with hearing problems often rely on lip-reading to understand what is being said. Consider using a clear face covering to make your mouth visible, instead of a cloth covering. It is important to know with a little extra effort and problem solving, we can all communicate clearly while staying safe.

For more information contact Sonia Cooper, Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Agent in the River Valley Extension District by calling 785-632-5335 or email srcooper@ksu.edu.

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