

# Masks make talking even tougher for people who stutter

September 9 2020

---



(HealthDay)—Face masks may be invaluable in the fight against

COVID-19, but they can make it difficult for people who stutter to communicate with others.

About 3 million people in the United States stutter, according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The use of face [masks](#) in public is likely to continue for months or even longer.

Solid [face masks](#) can lead to misunderstandings because they hide your mouth. Many people who stutter experience long, silent pauses (blocks) in their [speech](#). Often, the only way a listener realizes that someone is having a block is by looking at their face.

If you stutter, the person you're talking to may not realize you're experiencing a block if you're wearing a mask. This could lead that person to talk over you, move on, or misinterpret what may seem like a non-response, according to the association.

This type of situation can be especially serious if you are trying to communicate with [health care providers](#), first responders or police.

To reduce the risk of problems, the ASHA offers the following advice:

- Tell people you stutter. You can say this at the beginning of a conversation or carry a printed card. That way, people know to give you extra time if you need it. It also can help remove some pressure if you're anticipating speech difficulties.
- Wear a clear mask. Practice conversations at home. Check online support groups for suggestions. If you're working with a speech-language pathologist, ask for suggestions about modifying your speech therapy techniques.
- If the roles are reversed and you're talking to someone with a [stutter](#) who's masked up, be patient. Don't try to finish their

thought or speak for them, the speech and hearing experts say.

- If you don't understand what the other person is saying, say so. Be open to other ways of communicating, such as reading a written message.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders has more on [stuttering](#).

Copyright © 2020 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Masks make talking even tougher for people who stutter (2020, September 9) retrieved 16 May 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-masks-tougher-people-stutter.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.