

# Communication

## Benefits of Effective Communication



In response to COVID-19, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)—such as face masks and shields, as well as physical distancing—presented challenges for communication, especially for persons with hearing and/or cognitive impairments. Effective communication between LTC staff, residents and their loved ones helps to provide the type of care that is most responsive to residents' needs, values and preferences, and improves resident and family engagement and satisfaction.



## Supporting Effective Communication



- Greet each resident using their preferred name and “NOD” to introduce yourself (state your **name**, **occupation**, and **duty**):

*"Hi (Resident Name), it's (Staff/Volunteer/Family Name) in Housekeeping. I'm here to clean your room this morning. Is it okay if I start with sweeping the floor?"*

- Ensure you have the resident's attention—face the resident directly, talk a little louder and a little slower.
- Use your hands and body to convey your message (e.g. nod your head, make eye contact—smile with your eyes!).
- Be aware that residents may be stressed or afraid, so listen carefully and respond to questions and concerns. It is okay to comfort the resident when wearing PPE.
- Share information with residents and visitors in ways they can easily understand, this may include printed material in clear view placed around the LTC home.
- Explain COVID-19 outbreak protocols and prepare residents for changes.

## Helpful Communication Tips



- Use short, clear sentences: "The wind is really blowing today." Give extra time for a response.
- Show and talk: Ask the resident, "Do you have a headache?" and show them what you mean by putting your hand on your forehead.
- Validate rather than correct the resident: "That sounds interesting. Tell me more!"
- Use humour and music to connect and encourage more conversation.

## Creative Communication Ideas



- **Glasses/hearing aids:** Ensure the resident is wearing their devices to support best communication. Glasses need to be clean and hearing aid batteries require frequent changing.
- **Photos:** Consider using a visual image/photo of yourself without the mask/PPE to prompt recognition.
- **Whiteboards/dry erase boards:** A visually accessible form of communication—easy to use, portable, comes in different sizes, low cost.
- **Pictograms:** Graphic symbols or pictures can be personalized to common communication topics (e.g. care, mealtimes). They are most effective when printed in colour and laminated for easy cleaning.
- **Pocketalkers:** This device amplifies sounds closest to the listener while reducing background noise. Ideal for one-on-one conversation, small group and television listening, and can be used with or without hearing aids.
- **Use technology:** Organize virtual visit support when in-person visits are not permitted. Virtual calls can play an important role in facilitating live interactions between individuals.
- **Be creative!** Do not be afraid to use a trial-and-error approach to develop novel strategies to support communication and establish connections. It is important to share techniques that have been effective with the whole care team.

