

## How to communicate with a protective mask

With many countries requiring people to wear protective mask during certain activities, these masks will probably continue to accompany us in our everyday lives for even longer. A protective mask protects people in the vicinity of the wearer of the face mask from droplets that the wearer produces when talking, sneezing or coughing.



Because most people are still unaccustomed to speaking with a face mask, this brings unusual situations in the company of others, especially in personal communication, where talking with a face mask can become an acoustic challenge. The following tips can help to facilitate the use of the face mask:

### **Breathing consciously after putting the mask on**

Depending on the thickness and nature of the mask, inhalation and exhalation are suddenly slowed down considerably. It is therefore helpful to take three calm and relaxed breaths immediately after putting on the protective mask. When exhaling, try to consciously direct the flow of breath downwards so that it flows outwards over the chin and neck. To do this, pull your lower lip back a little, then exhale downwards. The advantage of this is that the mask stays dry around the nose for a longer period of time and glasses do not get foggy.

### **Diaphragm training to train breathing muscles**

To strengthen the breathing muscles for wearing a protective mask, a "candle blowing exercise" is recommended. For this exercise, imagine three candles ten centimeters in front of the mouth, which are blown out with three small, short but violent blasts of air at "FFF". If you do this exercise correctly, the navel will also move.

### **Focus on the conversation partner**

The face mask around the nose and mouth acts like a silencer. Wearers of protective masks also tend to speak indistinctly. To ensure that the clearly slowed down sound waves still reach the receiver and that you are understood well, consciously turn towards the person you are talking to and try to focus them inwardly.

This automatically makes the voice more stable. People who generally speak quickly should mentally slow down the speech rate when using a face mask - this makes you easier to understand. With a face mask, the volume may well be a bit louder, because the sound waves have to pass through a barrier after all.

### **Targeted use of facial expressions**

In a conversation, you try to understand the other person through their body language to prevent misunderstandings, but this is difficult to achieve in times of mouth and nose protection. When wearing a face mask, only the eye area is visible - therefore: Smile with your eyes. In addition, the eyebrows currently have the greatest long-distance effect because raised eyebrows signal a willingness to communicate with the person opposite.

Try to articulate yourself more clearly than usual with a face mask. Especially in the facial area you should allow more movement. Small exercises such as lip fluttering, grimace cutting or soft, enjoyable chewing movements before putting on the mask are very helpful.

### **Maintaining a clear view for wearer of glasses**

When wearing mouth and nose protection masks, the hot breath - which is generated above the mask - clouds the vision for wearer of glasses. This leads to an annoying side effect for spectacle wearers - they quickly lose their vision. Therefore, it is important to make sure that the mask fits well on the nose and is reinforced with a wire if possible.

There are also the following tricks for wearer of glasses when wearing protective masks to ensure a better seal in the direction of the glasses. First, with thin, folded protective masks, it is helpful to simply fold in the upper edge of the mask. In addition, you should wear the glasses over the mask so that the glasses nose pads are at the top edge of the mask. A folded handkerchief can also help, which you can place on the inside of the mask over the areas where the glasses are placed. Finally, special anti-fogging products are available from the optician.

---