

April 22, 2020

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Clients with cognitive impairment may have difficulty expressing and understanding language. They depend on non-verbal communication (smiles, gentle tone of voice, gestures, and body language that communicates warm and positive interactions) to understand care providers.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) will have an impact on the client's ability to understand the verbal and non-verbal communication of care providers.
- Care providers are encouraged to consider the following ABC mnemonic when communicating¹:

Attend Mindfully – Be aware that the PPE will further limit your client's ability to understand what you are saying and give the client and the communication your full attention.

Behave calmly – Approach from the front, meet your client at their eye level, avoid sudden movements. Project a calm, positive attitude.

Communicate clearly – Speak in short, simple sentences. Keep your tone gentle and your voice even. Speak slowly and clearly. Underline your words with gestures.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CARE STRATEGIES

- Designate specific individuals who have been provided additional training to do swabs with all clients in the facility. [Watch this video on how to do a nasal swab.](#)
- Have a staff person with whom the client is familiar, and enjoys a positive relationship, assist the person who is conducting swabs. If possible, have a third staff person present to assist and ensure safety.
- Attempt swabbing at a time when the client is generally calm and not easily triggered.
- Seat the client upright in a chair in their room (away from noise and distractions). Wrap them snugly with a blanket over their shoulders. The snug sensation will comfort them and prevent any sudden arm movements during the procedure.

Only the care provider who is familiar with the client should speak to the client during the procedure to avoid creating confusion or overstimulation from too many voices.

- Tailor the communication based on the client's comprehension:
 - For clients with preserved comprehension, provide a simple, clear explanation of the procedure (e.g. ***"We will do a swab of your nose for infection. It will not take very long. I will stay with you."***).
 - In situations where the client's comprehension is impaired, it may be less stressful for the client if they receive step-by-step instructions, given gently, to guide them through the process. (e.g. ***"I will help you sit down. Here is a blanket for you. Tilt your head back. Close your eyes..."***)
- If using throat swabs, some clients may recognize a tongue depressor and its purpose and open their mouth accordingly. [This video](#) demonstrating mouth opening may help cue the client and can be shown on an iPad or tablet. Provide added sound ***"Aaahhh!"***.
- Once completed, acknowledge that the process may have been uncomfortable and thank the client for participating.

REFERENCES

1. Schlögl M, Jones C. Maintaining our humanity through the mask: Mindful communication during COVID-19. [Internet] JAGS. 13 April 2020 [cited 2020 April 16]. Available from doi.org/10.1111/jgs.16488

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