

Phonak Guide

Audiological recommendations for using Roger™ or PartnerMic™ when the talker is wearing a mask

COVID-19 continues to disrupt our personal and professional lives in unforeseen ways. As countries begin to ease stay-at-home restrictions, life is getting back to a new and different normal. When the person talking is wearing a face mask, speech can become muffled and lipreading becomes impossible, making communication with a person with hearing loss even more difficult. Improving the communication in such cases is most effectively done by using a remote microphone in lapel mode, such as Roger Select™ or Phonak PartnerMic™ and Roger Touchscreen Mic for children.

1. Studies show that face masks attenuate high-frequency speech sounds above 2kHz.¹
2. Using a Roger system while wearing a face mask will still provide the known benefits* of Roger for hearing in noise and over distance. *(A Roger system consists of a Roger microphone and a Roger receiver with a hearing instrument.)* However, there may be a change in perceived sound quality as a result of the high-frequency attenuation of the face mask. This will depend on several factors including the type of mask worn, the position of the mask, and the speaker's voice. HCPs should counsel appropriately!
3. Internal tests with Roger Touchscreen Mic have shown lapel mode is less impacted by the presence of a face mask than a boom microphone. If a boom microphone is to be worn, we recommend it be worn outside of the mask.
4. We recommend the use of Phonak PartnerMic to facilitate in-clinic communication with all clients wearing any Marvel hearing aid. With a simple pairing, the PartnerMic can be connected to any Marvel hearing aids, easing communication during appointments where face masks and social distancing are required. This also provides a great opportunity for our HCPs to actively demonstrate the benefit of our remote microphone solutions.
5. For adults we strongly recommend the use of Roger Pen™, which gives the client the ability to use pointing mode to hear others without needing others to touch the microphone and risk cross-contamination.

***See earlier studies for evidence of the benefits of using Roger technology:**

Phonak FSN: Benefits in speech recognition in noise with wireless remote microphones in a simulated group setting for adults with hearing loss

https://www.phonakpro.com/content/dam/phonakpro/gc_hq/en/resources/evidence/field_studies/documents/fsn_roger_group_setting_speech_recognition_benefit_en.pdf

Sage Journals: Effect of Hearing Aid Directionality and Remote Microphone on Speech Intelligibility in Complex Listening Situations:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2331216518804945>

Phonak FSN: Comparison of wireless microphones – Study indicates that Roger delivers superior listening performance in moderate-to-high background noise

https://www.phonakpro.com/content/dam/phonakpro/gc_hq/en/resources/evidence/field_studies/documents/fsn_Roger_Microphone_Performance_Comparison.pdf

¹ Goldin, A., Weinstein, B., Shiman, N. (2020) How Do Medical Masks Degrade Speech Reception? Hearing Review retrieved 20200602 from <https://www.hearingreview.com/hearing-loss/health-wellness/how-do-medical-masks-degrade-speech-reception>