

Transcript: Preparing an emergency medical “go bag” for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services wants to share a few important suggestions with you in case you need to go to a clinic or hospital during this pandemic. These ideas are gathered from National Association of the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America, and TDI.

Going to the hospital or clinic during this pandemic is scary for most people because of the worry they may be exposed to COVID-19. For Deaf and hard of hearing people there is the added fear that they won't be able to communicate with anyone because medical staff are wearing face masks.

You have the right to request an interpreter, and the hospital or clinic might even have one available to you. But during this pandemic, the hospital or clinic might not be able to provide an ASL interpreter. You can also request that medical staff remove their mask so you can see their face and read their lips. But medical staff are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) for their own personal safety and might not be allowed to remove it, for their own safety.

Given these challenges, it is wise to prepare ahead of time for other ways to communicate with medical staff, as well as anything else you might want to have with you in case you are at the hospital or clinic for a while.

We recommend you set up a “go bag” to have ready in case you are not feeling well and need to leave fast for the hospital.

For your go bag, include the following *[camera will focus – back and forth – close-up on each item right after it is described, then back to the interpreter for the next description]*:

- A small card saying “I am Deaf or hard of hearing,” and mark on it the ways people can communicate with you.

- A larger sheet where you can circle your symptoms, where you traveled recently, if you were around someone with COVID-19, and how many days you have not felt well. We will include links to both of these on our website, which will be shown at the end of this video.
- Paper and pen for writing back and forth
- A list of your medical conditions, medications you take, and allergies you have.
- Your smartphone or tablet, with cords and chargers. Download several VRI and/or speech-to-text apps and test them out **now** so you are familiar with them in case you need them. Assistive Technologies, Inc. maintains a list of apps – their contact information is included on our website.
- If you have an assistive listening device, keep it charged and ready to add to your go bag.
- A charged power bank, in case you don't have access to a power outlet.
- Items for distraction and entertainment – a book, Sudoku, coloring book and colored pencils/pens.
- A bag that is easy to carry all these items in.

Place your go bag somewhere you'll find it easily.

Getting accessible communication in hospitals and clinics can be a challenge in normal circumstances. During this pandemic, taking these steps to prepare for a medical stay will give you more control over your ability to communicate, and to stay in touch with your loved ones. Thank you and stay safe!