Patients will have difficulty understanding you when you are speaking through a protective mask. Here are some tips to help bridge gaps in communication:

**Define Yes And No Signals**
- Establish a clear YES/NO signal (ex: head nod/shake, thumb up/closed fist, eye blink/eyes squeezed tight, look up/eyes shut).
- Post a sign so all providers know the YES/NO signal.
- Confirm the patient’s response – ask if you got it right.

**Establish Connection**
- Get the patient’s attention by touching shoulder or arm and locking eyes.

**Make It Easy To Be Heard**
- Speak loudly, slowly and clearly.
- Speak in simple phrases, like a television announcer. Repeat important words.

**Use Visuals While You Talk**
- Point and gesture.
- Write key words or phrases with bullet points on a paper.
- Point to pictures or phrases on a communication board while asking questions about needs or symptoms.

Improving Communication with Non-Speaking ICU Patients. (M. Happ, PI).
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