

Hearing loss - lipreading

Lipreading is the art of being able to see speech sounds. It is often called speechreading because people use other clues, such as facial expressions, gestures and surroundings, to help them understand what is being said.

Lipreading can help people who are hearing impaired to cope better with their hearing loss. Not every word needs to be understood for lipreading to be useful. Other skills can be developed that help a person understand better what is being said.

The benefits of lipreading

Lipreading benefits:

- **People who can only hear about half of what is said** – they will understand more through lipreading.
- **People who previously had normal hearing** – lipreading helps them to participate better in conversations.

The extent to which lipreading is helpful will depend on each person's natural aptitude for lipreading and the amount of effort applied.

Limitations of lipreading

Difficulties associated with lipreading include:

- Normal speech is too fast to lipread easily.
- Many speech movements are not seen.
- Many speech patterns are similar, leading to confusion and doubt.
- Some words look alike, even though they sound different.
- Many people do not speak clearly.

Lipreading cannot make up for the hearing that has been lost. It is not possible for a person to consistently understand everything that is said by lipreading alone.

Learning to lipread

Developing the ability to lipread requires:

- Practice
- Patience
- Perseverance.

Once the ability to lipread has been developed, constant use is required or your skill will decrease.

When speaking to a hearing impaired person

When speaking to a hearing impaired person, it is important that you face them, speak clearly and naturally, and don't cover your mouth.

Where to get help

- Better Hearing Australia Tel. (03) 9510 1577 TTY (03) 9510 3499, Fax (03) 9510 6076, email: bhavic@betterhearing.org.au

Things to remember

- The ability to lipread takes time and practice to develop.
- Lipreading helps people with previously normal hearing or limited hearing.
- Facial expressions and gestures also help lipreaders to understand what is being said.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Better Health Channel

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