



Quick Tips for communicating with a person who is on a ventilator

- Get the person's attention by touching their shoulder or arm and locking eyes
- Make sure their sensory needs are addressed (glasses and/or hearing aids)
- Establish a clear YES-NO signal (e.g., head nod/shake; thumb up/closed fist; eye blink/eye shut; look up/eyes shut)
 - Post signage so all providers know the individual's YES-NO signals
- Use yes/no questions
- Speak in simple phrases and pause between thoughts. Repeat important words
- Give the person extra time to think and respond
- Use visuals while you talk:
 - Point and gesture
 - Write key words or phrases with bullet points on paper
 - Point to pictures or phrases on a communication board while asking questions about needs or symptoms (samples below)
- Check understanding
- Before leaving, check in with the person. Ask how they are doing, and if they have any questions or concerns.

Communication Boards & Additional Learning Resources

- Printable AHS communication board including [basic needs, pain scale and letter board](#). Complete [an online request](#) to receive color print copies. Pads of paper/disposable communication boards are designed for infection prevention and control.
- [SPEACS-2](#) – A 60-70 minute training program for communicating with non-vocal patients from the Ohio State University College of Nursing (Free until June 1, 2020)

Resources available from [PatientProviderCommunication.org](#)

- Printable [communication board for a patient on ventilation](#)
- Additional communication boards to support medical decision making, pediatric resources and pain scales at [COVID-19 Free Tools](#)
- [Communication Friendly COVID-19 Screening Tool](#) – pictures on this board may facilitate communication about COVID-19

AHS staff may access a wide range of additional resources (e.g., strategies for preparing for communication loss, more specific communication boards, learning opportunities, etc.) by contacting practice.consultation@ahs.ca