

# Communication Access – Person who is Ventilated

## Tips for communicating with a person 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 person'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 (see Patient and Family Communication Kit)
- Check understanding through asking yes/no questions
- Before leaving, check in with the person. Ask “Do you need anything?”, “Do you have any questions?” If the response is yes, use visuals or a communication board to help aid communication.

Additional Communication Access resources are available on the [ahs.ca Communication Access](https://ahs.ca/Communication-Access) site.

For further information, learning and support, please contact your local speech-language pathologist, audiologist or [practice.consultation@ahs.ca](mailto:practice.consultation@ahs.ca).



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