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**UNC GREENSBORO**  
Speech and Hearing Center

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**UNCG Speech and Hearing Center**



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## *The Hearing Herald*

14<sup>th</sup> Edition  
February 2021

# New Year, New Start!



Although no one could have predicted how challenging 2020 was going to be, we certainly learned some lessons along the way. Words such as flexibility, perseverance, and resilience come to mind along with words like fear, loneliness, and downright hard. We learned the importance of finding ways to be together even when distance kept us apart. And those of us with hearing loss encountered new barriers that would make communication even more difficult. Now, we welcome a new year with open arms. While we can't and shouldn't leave the lessons we've learned behind, we look to the future with new perspective and hope for a better tomorrow.

UNC Greensboro Speech and Hearing Center is proud to have found new ways to meet your hearing health care needs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We introduced curbside appointments and embraced Telehealth to reduce face-to-face contact and provide remote counseling. We have even been able to program hearing aids over the phone! Our presence on social media has grown as we have reached out to share information with patients in new ways. We even installed a new mailbox in our parking lot for contactless drop-offs and pickups. Despite all of the challenges, the Center has seen an influx of appointments for hearing evaluations and hearing aids associated with increased communication difficulties caused by facemasks and technology. Although we share only a fraction of what we have learned in this newsletter, we encourage you to like our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/uncgaudiology](http://www.facebook.com/uncgaudiology)) or Instagram page (@uncgshc) for ongoing updates.

Our audiologists wish to thank you for your support and continued patience in 2021 as we strive to keep you and our staff safe. We have a limited number of face-to-face appointments due to space constrictions and increased time needed to sanitize between appointments. At times, this may mean asking you to meet us curbside, virtually, or by telephone. We promise that we will continue to provide the high quality service you deserve. **Find your support here!**

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## *The Hearing Herald*

14<sup>th</sup> Edition  
February 2021

### **Important Hearing Health Updates Inside!**

Learn about the latest in hearing aid technology and maintenance, the link between COVID-19 and hearing loss, helpful tips for communicating during the pandemic, and ways to avoid losing your hearing aids. Plus, find out about our new providers and new appointment types including curbside and telehealth. Our audiologists and doctoral clinicians are committed to providing the highest standard of care and outstanding customer service.

**Find your support here!**

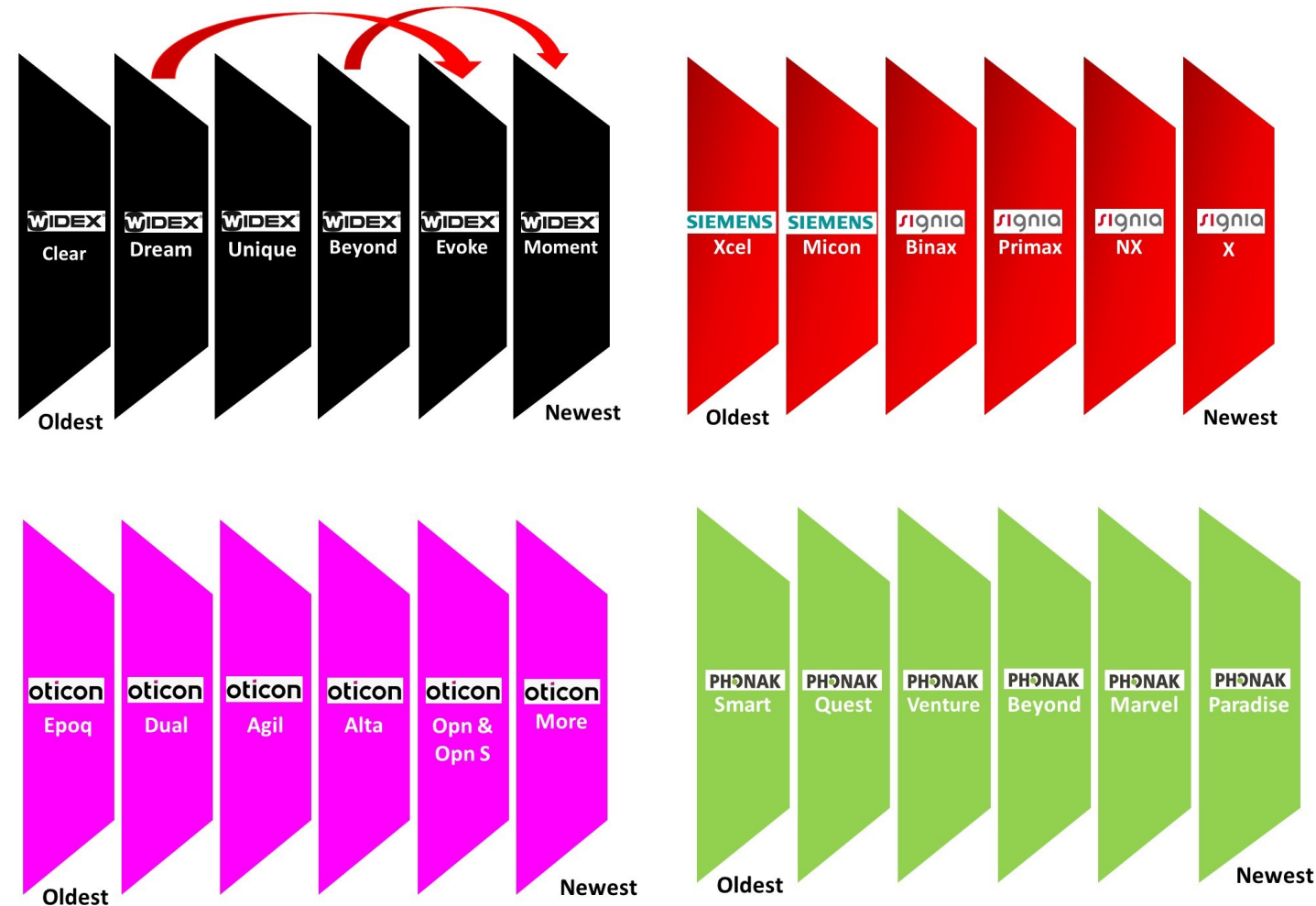
For ongoing updates, follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/uncgaudiology](http://www.facebook.com/uncgaudiology))  
and Instagram (@uncgshc)

# What's NEW in 2021?

**How do you know when you're ready for hearing aids?** When your hearing loss begins to impact your life to the extent that you are missing out in conversations, avoiding social situations, or finding yourself exhausted from effortful listening.

**How do you know when you're ready for NEW hearing aids?** When your hearing aids are no longer functioning, lack desirable features such as Bluetooth connectivity, and/or fall short of your listening needs.

Hearing aid manufacturers release technology every 1–2 years. Patients often report a notable difference when trialing devices that are **two or three generations** newer than their existing aids. See the evolution of hearing aids below for the big six manufacturers: Signia (Siemens), Oticon, Phonak, ReSound, Starkey, and Widex. Most people consider upgrading their hearing aids every 5–7 years, which is the average lifespan of most devices depending on care and maintenance. Let us know if you are interested in free in-office demonstration of new hearing technology. Our expert audiologists would be happy to assist you.



## Dr. Jennifer Burkey has joined our team of audiology experts!



**Jennifer Burkey, Au.D., CCC-A** is a clinical audiologist and native North Carolinian. Dr. Burkey holds a Certificate of Clinical Competence in Audiology from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Audiology. She is a licensed audiologist in the state of North Carolina. Her undergraduate and doctoral studies were completed at UNC Chapel Hill. She worked previously at Ear Center of Greensboro and joined UNC Greensboro as an AP Assistant Professor in May 2020. Dr. Burkey specializes in diagnostic audiology, fitting of hearing aids and assistive listening devices, and programming of implantable hearing devices. In her free time, she enjoys baking, cheering on the Tar Heels, and spending time with family.



**Amy Myers, Au.D., CCC-A** has been reappointed as an AP Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Disorders and serves as Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies. She also is a clinical audiologist who specializes in hearing loss and hearing aids.



**Lisa Fox-Thomas, Ph.D., CCC-A** has been promoted to an AP Professor in the Department of Communication Disorders and the Assistant Director of the Speech and Hearing Center. She is a clinical audiologist who specializes in tinnitus, sound sensitivity disorders, and auditory processing disorders.

## Meet our doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) Interns



Katie Baker is from Columbus, Ohio and she is currently a student at The Ohio State University. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Ohio University in 2017. Katie's interests include working with the adult and geriatric population and new advancements in hearing aid technology. In her free time, Katie enjoys the outdoors, exploring new cities, and spending time with family and friends. Katie is excited to spend the year at UNCG.



Dani Jenkins graduated from University of Central Florida with a Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders in 2016. She is currently a student at Pacific University in Oregon. Helping others has always been a huge passion for Dani. She believes audiology gives her the opportunity to touch the lives of people who feel disconnected from their loved ones. Some of her favorite hobbies include: rollerblading, hiking, playing volleyball, going to the beach and being creative with new recipes in the kitchen. She also enjoys snuggling with her black fluffy cat, Gus. She is very excited to meet the patients at UNCG and to explore the area of North Carolina!

# Find your support here!

The UNC Greensboro Speech and Hearing Center currently offers curbside, face-to-face, and telehealth appointments. All in-person appointments require screening for COVID-19.

**Upon arrival, patients remain in the car and answer the following questions by telephone before entering the building:**

1. Have you had a fever of 100 degrees or greater within the past 48 hours?
2. Do you currently have (or have you recently had) one or more of the following symptoms: cough, runny nose, fever, chills, nasal congestion, sore throat, shortness of breath, or loss of taste or smell?
3. Have you been recently tested for COVID 19?
4. Have you been in close contact with someone who has tested positive or is being tested for COVID 19?

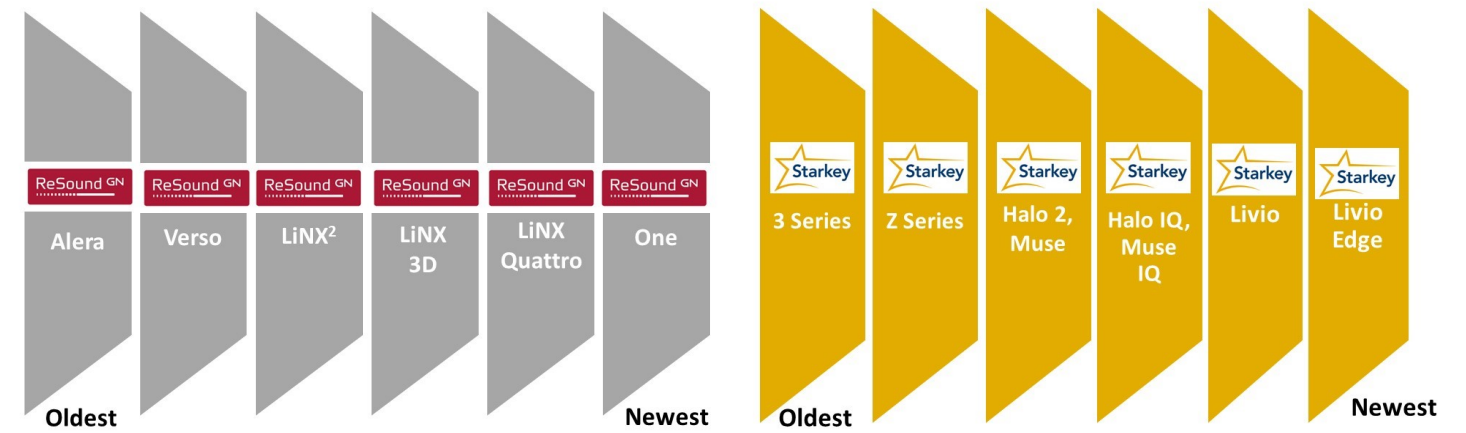


In addition, to keep you and our providers safe, **only one support person may accompany the patient** to the appointment and must also answer the COVID-19 screening questions.



**Curbside appointments** are an excellent low-contact option for maintenance appointments like tubing changes and some hearing aid repairs. Here's what to expect: The audiologist will meet you at the car to pick up your hearing aids. If needed, the audiologist will call you on the phone to discuss any questions or concerns and return your devices upon completion. Ask when you schedule your appointment if curbside is right for you!

**Telehealth appointments** also are available for consultations, follow-ups, and even some hearing aid programming. Most hearing aid manufacturers now offer the ability to make adjustments to Bluetooth connected hearing aids and a compatible smartphone (Apple and/or Android). Talk to your audiologists if you are interested in telehealth services. We can let you know if your hearing aids can be adjusted remotely.



## Check In for a Check Up

Hearing aid maintenance may not be at the top of your “to do” list. However, you may be missing out and not even know it. Dirty hearing aids can become weaker and distorted over time, but you may not notice because the change is gradual. Often, patients report their hearing aids sound “so much better” after a good cleaning. And, just like you get your teeth cleaned to prevent cavities, routine hearing aid checks may protect your investment and avoid more costly repairs in the future. Audiologists have special tools that can be used to clean your instruments including vacuums to remove wax, dead skin, and debris and dehumidifiers to remove moisture from your hearing aids. We also can replace your tubes, wax guards, and/or domes to restore your hearing aid to optimum condition. If it has been more than six months since you had your hearing aid cleaned last, it is time for a check up. Schedule a curbside appointment and you won't even have to get out of your car! We will pick up your devices and bring them back to you in less than 30 minutes. Average cost of a check and clean is \$25. Additional repairs or services may require additional time and/or cost.

## Hearing Loss & COVID-19

Based on published case reports, it appears that sudden hearing loss is *rarely* a symptom of COVID-19. However, developing hearing loss or tinnitus as a complication of COVID-19 infection is more common. This means it may not be part of the initial onset of symptoms but can develop later. Importantly, sudden hearing loss is considered a medical emergency. Seek medical attention immediately if you experience sudden hearing loss, preferably within 48 hours. The faster you get treatment, the more likely you'll get your hearing back. **If you think your hearing may have changed because of COVID-19, see your doctor or call 336-334-5939 for a comprehensive evaluation.**

# Communicating during the Pandemic

We all can agree that one downside of facemasks is increased difficulty understanding regardless of the situation or our hearing status. Facemasks not only decrease audibility of speech by up to 12 dB, but they also obscure important visual cues necessary for speech reading. Most people rely on speech reading, but especially those with hearing loss. Soft high-frequency consonants are the most difficult to hear, but the easiest to see. Some facemasks are clear allowing for better speech reading. Check out: <https://www.today.com/shop/how-shop-clear-face-masks-t189970>

Technology is another barrier for some people. Video conferencing services such as Zoom, Facetime, and Google Meet have allowed us to stay connected during the Pandemic. However, the web connection can be unreliable making conversations challenging. Did you know some of these services offer live captioning? There also are free live captioning apps for the smartphone that could help. Check out: <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/47850-The-best-phone-captioning-apps-for-the-hearing-impaired>

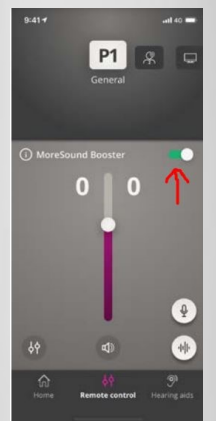
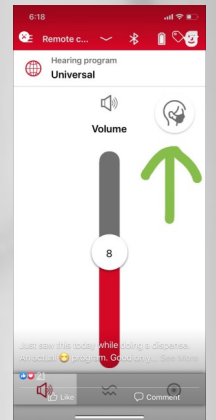
Consider these other helpful communication tips to improve understanding when speaking to someone while wearing a mask or over technology when the signal is less than ideal:

- Speak slowly, clearly and a little louder
- Rephrase remarks when not understood
- Get the listener's attention before speaking and take turns
- Face each other (at a safe distance)
- Instead of saying "huh?" or "what?", ask specific questions if you misunderstand
- Keep background noise in the room to a minimum

(adapted from: <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53084-Face-masks-and-hearing-aids>)

# Wearing Facemasks and Hearing Aids

Hearing aid manufacturers recommend specialized "mask programs" that can offer patients better audibility when speaking to someone who is wearing a facemask. These programs highlight important high-frequency sounds that provide speech clarity while more aggressively managing competing background noise. Ask your audiologist if you are interested in setting up a mask mode for your hearing aids. For those with Signia X devices paired to their Bluetooth Smartphone, there is a special mask mode already available in the *Signia App*. Simply click the icon of the facemask on the home screen to toggle mask mode on and off. The Oticon Opn Sound Booster in the *On App* can serve a similar purpose.



Retention of hearing aids has been a concern during the pandemic due to the use of facemasks. Many patients have reported losing their hearing aids when taking off their masks. Consider masks that do not loop behind the ears or special mask clips to help avoid interaction of masks and hearing aids. There are a variety of styles available online (google "mask clips" or see <https://www.health.com/condition/infectious-diseases/coronavirus/best-face-mask-extenders>).

One style (#2 in the infographic) is available at the **Speech and Hearing Center** to anyone with a scheduled appointment (one free per patient). Just ask your audiologist if interested.

