

Hearing HealthCare News®

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

Spring 2020

Your Healthy Hearing Check-up

Regular hearing health check-ups are an important part of good hearing health care. Your hearing check-up includes the following:

1. Hearing test. Do you think your hearing has changed? We'll compare the results to your previous hearing levels. If we find a change, we'll recommend treatment or adjust your hearing aids to compensate for any change in hearing.

2. Re-program your hearing aids. Sometimes a re-programming of your hearing aids based on a change in your hearing is helpful. Many people find they hear a little better after this adjustment.

3. Ear canal examination. Earwax is one of the most common causes of hearing aid feedback (whistle) and hearing aid repairs.

4. Clean and adjust your hearing aids. Regular cleaning minimizes hearing aid repairs and makes sure that your hearing aids are providing the maximum benefit. Cleaning your hearing aids sometimes provides a small but noticeable improvement.

5. Review other sources of help. This is a good time to ask about telephone amplifiers, clock and smoke alarms, and devices for television and group settings.

Your hearing deserves good care! Please call our office to schedule an appointment.

WELCOME

... to the Spring issue of our patient newsletter. We hope you find the information useful for you and your family and friends.

Our practice is based on these fundamental principles:

- Hearing loss is serious
- Hearing loss deserves professional care
- Hearing aids improve lives

The Effects of Hearing Loss on Family and Friends

Hearing loss can affect your ability to communicate with family and friends. Hearing loss can also affect quality of life and health status. People who do not seek help for their hearing loss are at greater risk for dementia, depression and serious falls.

One area that has not received much attention is the effects of hearing loss on the people around the individual. Can hearing loss interfere with personal relationships?

Hearing loss can have significant effects on relationships with family and friends. Ironically, the closer the relationship, the greater the effects. These effects can be categorized according to efforts to *deny* the hearing loss and efforts to *cope* with the hearing loss. The refusal to recognize hearing loss or to seek help can be the greatest source of negative effects.

Driving Tips



With many drivers today using cell phones to talk and even text while behind the wheel, driving can be a stressful experience. Here are some suggestions:

- ✓Using a cell phone while driving is illegal in most states (unless hands-free). About 10% of all accidents are attributed to distracted driving.
- ✓Keep the radio volume to a minimum so you can hear traffic sounds.
- ✓You can't read lips while driving! If having a conversation distracts you, ask your passengers not to talk to you unless necessary.
- ✓Make frequent use of all side and rearview mirrors when changing lanes and passing. Many side mirrors now have visual warning lights when a car is in your blind spot.
- ✓The sound of most turn signals are not designed for people with hearing loss. Look to make sure your turn signal is off after making a turn.



The refusal to recognize hearing loss can lead to family conflict.

Denial

Hearing loss usually develops so gradually that the person is not aware of any change. It's not unusual to wait 5, 10 or even 20 years to seek help. During this time, family and friends may engage in compromises and arguments as they try to deal with a hearing loss that hasn't been acknowledged (*"I would hear if everybody didn't mumble!"*).

Family members may become more annoyed at the refusal to seek help than at the hearing difficulties themselves. Stress, friction and arguments can be the result (*"You can hear me when you want to!"*).

Family members may stop talking about unimportant matters because "it's not worth the effort." They may even avoid interacting at all. In social situations, the normal-hearing spouse may act as an interpreter to help the spouse keep up with conversations. This can interfere with the relationship because of the change from previous, more independent roles.

Acceptance

When the hearing loss is finally recognized, efforts to minimize the effects of the loss can begin. With proper help—almost always through the use of hearing aids—most people with hearing loss can watch television at a normal volume, hear family and friends most of the time, and ask people to repeat less often. These changes make life easier for everyone. Family and friends also know the person has made a commitment to minimize the effects of hearing loss.

Summary

Hearing loss can have significant effects on the individual's family and friends. With the help available today, these effects are minimized for everyone—the person with the loss and their family and friends.

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Many Toys Have Potentially Damaging Noise Levels

Every year the Sight & Hearing Association (SHA) measure the noise levels of toys from the shelves of local toy stores. Measurements of 24 popular toys found that more than half of those selected produce potentially damaging levels of noise.

Two of the most popular toys for infants, Bright Stars Safari Beats Musical Toy and Spin & Sing Zoo tested at 102 dB (A).

Toys are required to meet noise standards of the American Society of Testing and Material. However, the sound measurements are taken about 20 inches from the toy, which is significantly further than the typical distance children use toys.

The acceptable level of 85 dB (A) is a standard that was originally set for adults in industrial and military settings, not for children. Furthermore, 85 dB (A) has been listed as an acceptable noise level, not as a level that may not damage hearing over an extended period.

According to Kath Web of SHA, children often hold these toys up to their ears, creating the potential for hearing damage. She also suggested the presence of noisy toys may acclimate infants and children to the presence of noise, regardless of effects on hearing. For more information, go to www.sightandhearing.org

Hospital Noise Levels May Affect Health

The noise levels in many hospitals may affect patients' health.

Hospital noise can disturb patient sleep, affect blood pressure and interfere with patient recovery. Hospitals have something in common with restaurants: a common complaint is "too noisy."

Many hospitals have developed programs to control noise. Steps include the use of personal pagers, "quiet" periods and noise monitors. Medicare payment rates include patient ratings of quality of care. But in many hospitals—as in many restaurants—noise levels get the worst marks.

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Medicare Hearing Act of 2019

For our Medicare beneficiaries, you may want to take note of legislation introduced in both chambers of Congress which can affect how Medicare patients can access hearing care services from an audiologist. The **Medicare Audiologist and Access Services Act of 2019 (HR 4056)** and its Senate companion bill (**S.2446**) adds new hearing benefits and the ability to access hearing care services provided by audiologists without first obtaining a physician's order.

This act, if signed into law, would simplify access to audiology services and possibly increase coverage for audiology services. We endorse this effort and encourage you to contact your congressional representatives and ask them to support the **Medicare Hearing Act of 2019**.

As always, we are grateful for choosing us as your hearing care provider.

Sincerely,

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