

Hearing HealthCare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends



Spring 2022

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

2. 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.

3. Re-program your hearing aids. Sometimes a re-programming of your hearing aids due to a change in your hearing or in your hearing needs is helpful. You may find you hear better after this adjustment.

4. Clean 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 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.

Hearing Care and COVID-19

We have always followed strict procedures for infection control. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, we have instituted additional stringent procedures in accordance with national and professional association guidelines. We know it's vital that we protect your overall health as we provide your hearing health care needs. Stay safe!

Hearing Aids Linked to Improved Brain Health

Numerous studies have found a relationship between untreated hearing loss and a decline in mental function in older adults.

Researchers have suggested that using hearing aids can minimize



Exercise is good for your body—and your hearing.

that risk of mental decline. But do we know that hearing aids protect mental health?

What we know

A number of studies have found that hearing aids appear to minimize decline in mental function associated

with hearing loss that goes untreated.

In one small study, adults who used hearing aids had no difference in a test of mental function than the group with normal hearing.

A much larger study of 4,000 older adults conducted over a 25-year period had similar findings. The adults who used hearing aids had no significant difference in mental performance than the group with normal hearing. The group that did not use hearing aids declined more on tests of brain function than those who used hearing aids.

Other studies have reported similar findings.

How do hearing aids help?

Hearing aids minimize the *social isolation* and *stress* that untreated hearing loss can cause. They also allow you to hear with less *effort*. It may be that social isolation and increased mental effort contribute to mental decline.

A large body of research now supports the importance of keeping your hearing active and healthy. Hearing aids don't only reduce social isolation and depression. They also appear to play an important role in keeping your brain healthy. And isn't it ironic that some people won't use hearing aids because "they make me look old," when hearing aids may actually keep your brain younger!

Speech-to-text Captioning Services

While hearing aids and cochlear implants are the major sources of help for people with hearing loss, there are many other devices and technologies available.

Assistive listening devices (ALD's) provide additional help for challenging settings. ALD's include large loop systems installed in churches and auditoriums and personal systems for use in classrooms, conference rooms, restaurants and cars. ALD's also include alerting devices such as smoke alarms or telephone and doorbell ring alerts.

Captioning

Displaying spoken words as written text (captioning) can provide important benefits for people with hearing loss. At one time, captioning was provided by human translators, and used primarily for movies and television.

In recent years, with the development of automatic speech recognition using artificial intelligence (AI), speech-to-text (STT) services have mushroomed. Computer-based captioning services are now common, low-cost, and available in real-time. For example, *Hamilton CapTel* and *CaptionCall* telephones use voice recognition technology to provide a written text on a large, easy-to-read screen. *InnoCaption* is a free app for a mobile smartphone or device that provides real-time captioning of any call.

Google, which owns *YouTube*, uses *Live Transcribe* to transcribe user-uploaded videos to display text in more than 100 languages. *Microsoft* provides SST services in 85 languages. And *Zoom*, the video conferencing service, is partnering with *Otter* to provide captioning during Zoom calls.

As computer-based automatic speech recognition algorithms improve, SST services will provide even more access to all modes of communication for people with hearing loss throughout the world.

WELCOME

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

Our practice is based on these fundamental principles:

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

Not All Improvements Are High Tech

Hearing instrument technology has improved dramatically in recent years and people with hearing loss have benefitted from these important advances. But other, less dramatic improvements have also made life easier for many people.

For example, a common repair for hearing aids was once replacement of the miniature speaker due to damage caused by wax, dust, and moisture. The introduction of effective and easily replaced **wax guards** has reduced those repairs by more than 50%. This simple improvement has reduced hearing aid maintenance costs and almost eliminated the annoyance of having a hearing aid out sent for repair.

Battery doors can break after several years of use. Battery doors are now

much more durable and, if necessary, easily replaced without touching the rest of the instrument.

Moisture can get inside a hearing aid and damage the internal components. Today's hearing aids have an **anti-moisture coating** that protects the electronic components and reduces repairs due to damage from moisture and humidity.

Batteries have also been improved, with more power storage and more consistent output. This has led to the use of smaller batteries, which means smaller and lighter hearing aids. Hearing aids with rechargeable batteries are also available. You place

these hearing aids in a recharging unit overnight rather than replacing batteries on a regular basis.

On the other hand, hearing aids no longer simply amplify sound. They monitor your surroundings, process sounds, control background noise, communicate with each other and stream wirelessly to phones and other devices. As a result, hearing aids use more battery power than ever.

These improvements may not seem dramatic, but more battery storage, more reliable hearing aids and fewer repairs have made life a little easier for everyone who uses hearing aids.

A number of "non-technology" improvements have made life easier for hearing aid users

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CaptionCall Telephone



Do you struggle to hear on the telephone?

Then the CaptionCall telephone might be the right solution for you!

CaptionCall is a federally funded ADA program that is available for individuals with hearing loss. This phone uses voice-to-text technology to transcribe your conversation. In other words, you can hear and read what the other person is saying. The phone displays big, easy-to-read text in real time and you have the ability to amplify the overall sound of the conversation. **CaptionCall** also allows for voicemails to be amplified and transcribed. In addition to the no-cost phone, **CaptionCall** provides complimentary delivery, installation and training.

Duncan-Nulph Hearing Associates has started offering a class once a month for any of our hearing aid users. We plan on having one class designated to CaptionCall and we will have CaptionCall representative present to answer any questions. Please stay tuned for more information regarding that date and time!

Sincerely,

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Duncan-Nulph Hearing Associates

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