

# Hearing HealthCare News<sup>®</sup>

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends



Fall 2022

## Hearing With Both Ears

**B**inaural hearing refers to hearing with both ears. We hear from our left and right ears independently, but we also use our brain to blend what we hear in our ears separately.

You might think that hearing with both ears is *twice* as good as hearing from either ear alone. It could be argued that it's *three* times as good. That's because when both ears—and both sides of the brain—are involved, we blend and compare what goes on between the two sides. We have *left ear* hearing, *right ear* hearing, and *combined* hearing.

This *left/right* interaction is especially helpful for hearing in difficult places. That explains why hearing in only one ear may be adequate in quiet settings, but not sufficient for hearing in noisy settings.

**We use our brain to blend together what we hear in each ear separately.**

Balanced, two-ear hearing is also necessary to locate the source of a sound. Someone with hearing in only one ear is not able to *localize* where a sound is coming from.

Believe it or not, in the 1980's most people with hearing loss were fit with monaural (single) hearing aids. But research in the 1990's provided convincing evidence of the many benefits of hearing with both ears. Researchers summarized the benefits:

- Better speech understanding
- Better hearing in groups and noisy settings
- Better ability to tell the direction of sound
- Better hearing for soft sounds
- Feeling of balanced hearing
- Keeping both ears active to preserve hearing ability
- Hearing and listening are less tiring

Today, almost everyone with hearing loss uses two hearing aids. An additional benefit is that many of today's high-tech hearing aids work together to give you a fuller picture of your sound world.

## Return of the Behind-the-ear Hearing Aid

**W**hen the behind-the-ear style hearing aid was introduced more than 60 years ago, it was hailed as a modern miracle. Transistors replaced vacuum tubes, changing the hearing aid from a large, heavy appliance to a truly personal device. Hearing aids became portable instruments weighing only ounces, instead of several pounds.

Over the next few decades, new microphones appeared that were only 1/10 the size, integrated circuits replaced transistors, and battery size was reduced by nearly 90%. Thanks to these developments, hearing aids became smaller and smaller. But by the 1990's, many hearing aid users decided the *behind-the-ear* (BTE) style, once regarded as sleek and small, was too large. The smaller *in-the-ear* and *in-the-canal* style became the most popular.

But that trend has reversed itself. In a remarkable turnaround, more than 80% of hearing aids purchased today

are the BTE style. What accounts for the return of the BTE hearing aid?

### Technology

Technological advances have made the BTE style more popular. BTE hearing aids are about 1/3 the size of earlier models. Another trend is the "open ear" fitting that places the receiver (speaker) in the ear canal. This allows the ear canal to remain open, which is a significant benefit for most hearing aid users. Canal and in-the-ear styles usually fill the canal more.



Today's BTE hearing aid is smaller and lighter than earlier versions.

### Cosmetics

Some people chose not to use the older BTE style because they felt it called attention to their hearing loss. But today many people—especially younger adults—have large, colorful and very visible devices over, behind and in their ears. These are usually earphones or wireless receivers for music or cell phones, and they represent the latest technology for wireless communication and entertainment. These devices are larger and more noticeable than today's BTE hearing aids.

As these other electronic devices have become more common, it may have reduced concerns about how hearing aids look. After all, if college students, office workers and others are wearing headsets and earpieces, who notices a small BTE?

What really counts, of course, is *hearing as well as possible*. The remarkable advances in technology have made that possible in a wide range of hearing aid styles.

### The Problem With Face Masks

Face masks have become a way of life as we strive to minimize the spread of coronavirus. But masks present a challenge to people with hearing loss. Masks reduce loudness slightly, but they reduce high-pitched sounds a lot. And it is the high-pitched sounds that provide speech clarity.

As a result, speech clarity is affected more than speech loudness. Face masks essentially give everyone a slight hearing loss—or for someone with a hearing loss, a slightly greater hearing loss.

Some people use a face shield. A face shield does not affect speech as much, and it maintains visual cues.

Face masks with clear windows are available. These preserve visual cues, which is important to help with lipreading. Unfortunately, these take away even more high-pitched sounds.

As important as masks and shields are, they make hearing more difficult for everyone—but especially for someone with a hearing loss.

## WELCOME

... to the Fall issue of our patient newsletter. We hope you find the information helpful 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**

## Do You Love Your Hearing Aids?

Do you remember when you got your first hearing aids?

If you're like most people, you put off getting those hearing aids for several years. You thought your hearing loss was not a problem—despite what your family said. But your family and friends complained about having to repeat themselves, or that the TV was too loud.

You finally went for a hearing test and got hearing aids. Your family is happier, you're more involved in social situations. You're even less tired at the end of the day.

### Better than ever

Hearing aids were once large, cumbersome, "dumb" devices that simply made sound louder. But hearing

aids have become very smart, using high-speed microprocessor to analyze and process sound. As a result, people with significant hearing loss can hear and understand better than ever, even in challenging situations. People with hearing loss who use hearing aids are happier, less isolated and actually feel healthier than those who don't use hearing aids.

### The biggest barrier

The significant improvements of the past few years have provided great benefits. Today, the biggest barrier to better hearing is not limitations in the help available. The biggest barrier to better hearing is the person with hearing loss who refuses to accept the

possibility of hearing loss.

It's not unusual for someone with significant hearing loss to put off seeking help for five or ten years. Perhaps it's a fear of "looking old." Or, "it's not that bad." Whatever the reason, hearing loss is one of the most common *untreated* health problems in adults.

### Our mission.

*Our mission is to help you hear as well as possible. Call us if you have any questions about your hearing, and please share this newsletter with anyone who you think is interested in better hearing.*

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Looking  
For That  
Perfect Gift



We have some great gift options for our hearing aid users. Many hearing aids are compatible with accessories that can make a big difference to a person with hearing loss.

The **TV Adaptor** is a device that is connected to the TV and allows for sound to go directly to a person's hearing aids. This allows them to enjoy TV at their own level, while the family can enjoy at their level! The **Connect Clip** transforms hearing aids into a wireless headset. An individual can make hands-free phone calls, stream music and utilize a remote microphone. The **Remote Control** allows for an individual to make volume changes easily and discreetly.

If you are not sure which accessory to choose, we have a gift certificate option that can be used for anything in the office! Please call our office with any questions.

Sincerely,

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