

Hearing HealthCare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

Spring 2023

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 your appointment.

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**

Tinnitus: That Annoying Buzzing, Ringing or Hissing in Your Ears

Tinnitus is a ringing, buzzing, humming, or roaring sound that a person hears when no outside sound is present. About 14 million people in the U.S. and Canada suffer from severe tinnitus.

About 20% of people with hearing loss complain of tinnitus. About 90% of people with severe tinnitus have hearing loss.

Causes

Tinnitus can be caused by high blood pressure, certain medications (including elevated levels of aspirin), noise, physical injury, Meniere's disease, and even impacted ear wax.

Tinnitus can cause stress and anxiety. Unfortunately, many tinnitus sufferers are told "there's nothing you can do about it, you'll just have

to live with it," but that's not true. Various treatments are available and most of those who seek treatment report some relief.



Help is available for people with tinnitus.

Helping the tinnitus patient

Tinnitus treatment may include medical and audiologic evaluation, information, counseling, and a treatment regime.

The purpose of the medical evaluation is to ensure that the tinnitus is not caused by a medical condition.

In most cases, no specific cause is found.

The purpose of the audiologic evaluation is to identify any hearing loss. Counseling and a tinnitus evaluation can also be considered.

Reducing intake of caffeine, nicotine and alcohol, minimizing noise exposure and moderate amounts of exercise can help. Counseling can also review the treatment options available.

There are a variety of tinnitus treatments available. These include tinnitus maskers, biofeedback, cognitive behavioral therapy, habituation therapy, hearing aids, medication and tinnitus maskers. A small bedside masker is helpful for many people who find their tinnitus interferes with sleep.

About 65% of those with both hearing loss and tinnitus report that their hearing aids reduce or eliminate their tinnitus. Someone with normal hearing might even use a tinnitus masker. This is a small instrument that looks like a hearing aid but produces a soft sound that reduces or eliminates tinnitus.

There are more than 50 over-the-counter products that claim to alleviate tinnitus. None have been clinically proven to alleviate tinnitus.

For more information, contact the American Tinnitus Association at 800-634-8978 or go to www.ata.org. The Consumer Handbook on Tinnitus is available by calling (928) 284-0860.

Hearing From Both Ears

Binaural hearing refers to hearing with both ears, which is what people with normal hearing have and use (except when on the phone!). People with hearing loss in both ears who use only one hearing aid may have monaural hearing (depending on the degree of hearing loss), while people who use two hearing aids have recovered binaural hearing.

You might think that hearing with both the right ear and left ear is twice as good as hearing from either ear alone. It could be argued that it's actually three times as good. That's because when both ears hear, both sides of your brain are actively involved in hearing. This allows the right and left sides of your brain to compare what each is receiving (binaural interaction).

The right/left binaural interaction occurs at several levels of the brain. Recent research suggests there is even more interaction than previously realized. This interaction becomes especially helpful for hearing in difficult places. This may explain why hearing in only one ear is adequate for quiet settings but not for noisy settings.

If You're Going to the Hospital . . .

A hospital stay is stressful for anyone. If you have a hearing loss, the normal stress of the hospital setting can be intensified by the communication difficulties caused by hearing loss.

Remember, hearing loss is an invisible condition and is often misunderstood. Doctors, nurses, aides, and other staff may not be aware of your hearing difficulties. Here are some steps you can take to ensure effective communication between you and your health care professionals:

➤ Be sure to tell the admissions office, the nursing station, and the nurses and aides around you that

you have a hearing loss. Don't assume they know!

➤ Ask that the **International Symbol for Hearing Impairment** be placed on your chart, on your wristband, above your bed, and on your door, as a reminder to the hospital staff.

➤ If you have spare hearing aids, use them rather than your newer ones. Hearing aids have a tendency to get lost during hospital stays!

➤ Place your hearing aid(s) in a special container with your name on it for safekeeping when you're not using them.

➤ Ask for assistive listening devices for the television and telephone (or bring your own).

➤ Try using the built-in captioning available on the television set (usually accessible through the remote control).

➤ Always try to have someone else with you when you're talking with your doctors.

**Take care . . .
hearing aids have a
tendency to get lost
during hospital stays!**

You and your family can be advocates, explaining to physicians, nurses and others how to make communication easier and more effective for someone with a hearing loss. *Feel better!*

Duncan *DN* Nulph
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Take Care

Steps to take care of your hearing aids, optimize sound quality and prolong life expectancy of hearing aid instruments.

Keep your hearing aids free of foreign debris by cleaning daily and changing wax guards regularly.

Keep your hearing aids dry. It is best to remove your aids when showering or swimming. If they get exposed to moisture, be sure to dry them as soon as possible.

Keep your hearing aids powered. To make the most of the battery life always turn off and store in their provided case when not in use. For non-rechargeable aids open the battery door and when possible, remove the batteries.

Keep your hearing aids safe. Be careful not to drop them on a hard surface and when you aren't using them keep out of reach of children and pets.

Schedule regular visits with our hearing care providers to ensure you are hearing your best.

Sincerely,

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Dr. Michelle Dukes, Au.D.

Duncan-Nulph Hearing Associates

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