

Hearing HealthCare News®

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

❄ Winter 2024

Do Hearing Aids Reduce the Risk of Dementia?

The effects of *untreated* hearing loss on mental health have gotten a lot of attention in the past few years. Even Katie Couric devoted an entire session of her popular online blog *Know It All* on the positive effects of hearing aids on brain health.

Several studies have found a relationship between untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline in older adults. We use the term "untreated" hearing loss to describe people with hearing loss who choose not to use hearing aids. The most common treatment for hearing loss is, of course, hearing aids.

Research has shown that for adults over the age of 60, about one third of the risk of dementia was associated with untreated hearing

No increased risk of dementia was found with people with hearing loss who used hearing aids.

loss. The good news, though, is that a growing body of research shows that using hearing aids can minimize and perhaps even prevent any increased risk of dementia due to hearing loss.

The hearing aid effect

It is unclear why using hearing aids significantly reduces the risk of dementia, but experts have offered several possible explanations. The positive effect of hearing aid use may be due to:

1. Someone with untreated hearing loss may have to reallocate brain resources to processing a reduced auditory signal
2. The social isolation caused by the untreated hearing loss
3. An unidentified degeneration of the aging brain that affects both brain function and hearing loss

As Katie Couric said in her online blog, whatever the causes, it's clear that hearing aids don't only help you maintain relationships with your family and friends more easily. Hearing aids also appear to help maintain good brain health throughout the life span.

I Was Wondering...

Is there a connection between health and hearing?

- A University of Florida study found that individuals with hearing loss who used hearing aids felt better about their health, even though their actual health status did not change.
- A study reported in the *Hearing Journal* found that for patients over 50 years of age, there was a significant correlation between good cardiovascular function and good hearing.
- A University of Maryland study found that patients with diabetes were 30% more likely to have hearing loss.
- A National Council on the Aging study found that non-hearing aid users were 50% more likely to report significant sadness, depression, anxiety or worry than people who used hearing aids.

If I have a hearing loss, why do loud sounds bother me?

One of the seeming contradictions of hearing loss is that people with sensorineural hearing loss lose the ability to hear soft sounds, but may hear loud sounds as well as anyone. Because of this effect, people with sensorineural hearing loss may be more sensitive to loud sounds than people with normal hearing are.

Hearing aids use *loudness compression* to compensate for this by gradually reducing amplification as

sounds get louder. A hearing aid might be programmed to amplify 25 decibels for soft sounds, but gradually reduce to only 10 decibels of amplification for loud sounds, and perhaps no amplification for very loud sounds. A very loud sound would be just as loud with or without the hearing aids. Of course, that sound is still loud!



I've been wondering...

How can I convince a friend to get hearing aids?

Rather than telling your friend to "get hearing aids," try suggesting that your friend have his or her hearing tested. It's painless,

inexpensive, kind of interesting... and nobody has ever complained if the test indicates normal hearing. Finding out about hearing could be your friend's first step to improved hearing.

My hearing aid batteries only last for two weeks, but my watch battery lasts for a year. Why don't hearing aid batteries last longer?

As hearing aids have gotten smaller and smaller, so have the batteries. The smallest hearing aid battery in use today is about 1/10 the size of the once common battery of the 1990s.

It could be worse. Until the introduction of transistors in the 1950s, hearing aids used vacuum tubes and hearing aid users wore batteries strapped to the leg!

I'm doing OK with one hearing aid. Why do most people use two?

The short answer: Because they want to hear as well as possible.

The long answer: When you hear with only one ear, you're using only half of your hearing system and half of your brain. People who use both ears may not hear twice as well, but they certainly hear much better and with less effort than someone using only one ear. That's why two hearing aids are better than one.

WELCOME

... to the Winter issue of our patient newsletter. We hope you find the information useful to you and to 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*

Can Hearing Aids Reduce Tinnitus?

More than 12 million Americans have severe tinnitus—a ringing, buzzing or roaring sound heard when no actual sound is present. Many people seek medical attention for their tinnitus.

There is a strong relationship between tinnitus and hearing loss. About 20% of people with hearing loss complain of tinnitus and about 90% of patients with severe tinnitus have hearing loss.

Tinnitus can be disturbing and upsetting. Unfortunately, many individuals are told "there's nothing that can be done to help. You'll just have to learn to live with it." But that just isn't true.

Help for tinnitus

Tinnitus treatments include medical and audiologic evaluation, information,

reassurance, counseling, and treatment.

Counseling can include recommendations about lifestyle, such as lowering intake of caffeine, nicotine and alcohol, minimizing noise exposure and getting moderate amounts of exercise. There are countless treatments available, many of them controversial and with little or no information about effectiveness.

Hearing aids can help

Many individuals with hearing loss and tinnitus don't seek help because they mistakenly believe their tinnitus prevents successful use of hearing aids. The majority of hearing aid users report just the opposite. Several surveys of hearing aid users found that not only

do their hearing aids help them hear better, hearing aids also significantly reduce their tinnitus.

For more information, call the **American Tinnitus Association** at (800) 634-8978 or go to www.ata.org.

Did You Know?

People with high blood pressure are 75% more likely to have hearing loss. Smokers are 70% times more likely to have hearing loss than non-smokers.

In Shakespear's play *Julius Caesar*, the emperor has a uni-lateral hearing loss. At one point Caesar says to Antony, "Come on my right side because this ear is deaf."


Duncan Nulph
HEARING ASSOCIATES

5020 Ritter Road, Suite 106
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

PSRGT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 762
Harrisburg, PA

W24/2500

Please
Welcome
Dr. Brown



At **Duncan-Nulph Hearing Associates**, we are delighted to share some exciting news. Starting October 23, 2023, we are welcoming audiologist **Dr. Lisa Brown, Au.D.** to our team.

Dr. Brown brings 15 years of experience in diagnostic audiological evaluations. She has worked most of those years in a medical setting specializing in hearing aid evaluations, counseling, fittings, and tinnitus management. Her compassionate approach and knowledge about the latest digital hearing aid technology provide patients with the best hearing healthcare for their lifestyle.

She earned her Doctorate of Audiology from **A.T. Still University Arizona School of Health Sciences** and holds both a Masters of Audiology and a Bachelors of Speech-Language-Hearing: Sciences & Disorders from the **University of Kansas**.

Congratulations to our 4 winners of a portable Oticon Smart Charger in celebration of our 16th Anniversary drawing.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kristen A. Duncan Au.D.

Dr. Danette Nulph, Au.D.

Duncan-Nulph Hearing Associates

Telephone: (717) 766-1500 • Visit us on the web: www.dnhearing.com