

# Hearing HealthCare News<sup>®</sup>

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

❄ Winter 2010

## Help Others To Hear Better

People often ask us, "How can I convince my (husband/wife/friend) to get help for his or her hearing difficulties?"

Why do so many people put up with hearing less than they could and why does the typical person wait *more than seven years* before getting help? Actually, there are good reasons why hearing loss is one of the most common undetected and untreated problems in adults:

- Hearing loss usually develops very, very *gradually*—so the person doesn't notice any difference.
- It's *painless* and *invisible*—so there are no obvious signs.
- Only certain sounds are affected, so noises and speech may be *loud* enough, but many words are not *clear* enough.
- Since the problems seem so inconsistent, depending on the place, the speaker, the background noise, it's easy to blame something else for the hearing problems ("I would hear fine if people didn't mumble . . . if the TV were turned up . . . if the phone connection were better").

Unfortunately, this also means that family and friends have to put up with the annoyances and aggravations caused by untreated hearing loss, while the person with the hearing loss is convinced there's really no problem, or at least that "it's no big deal."

### About that friend . . .

Nobody wants to be told "you should get hearing aids." Instead, try the following:

- **Suggest a hearing test.** Get specific information and professional advice. An audiologic evaluation doesn't hurt—and no one complains if the results indicate normal hearing.
- **Don't criticize.** Instead, stress that you simply want the person to be able to stay in touch with people as easily and as well as possible.
- **Don't compensate.** By talking louder, you're helping to pretend there isn't a problem. When you have to speak louder, let the person know that you're speaking louder than normal.
- **Give them this newsletter.** Information and knowledge are important tools in the effort to hear as well as possible.

## Sometimes People Talk Too Fast!

One of the most common complaints we hear is the difficulty understanding fast speech. People often say, "I just can't keep up when people talk fast."

We live in a fast-paced world. We're bombarded with television, radio, phone calls from people we don't know—and it all comes at us at a fast pace.

Understanding fast speech is a common hearing complaint of older adults—including adults with normal hearing. The problem may be related to reduced memory abilities and an age-related decrease in the efficiency of the nervous system. This difference is seen in adults even in their 40s.

*"Rapid speech is difficult even for normal hearing older adults."*

This "age-related slowing" also occurs for non-language tasks. In fact, older adults maintain their linguistic skill quite well, perhaps because they have become so experienced at it.

Rapid speech is difficult even for normal-hearing older adults, but it becomes easier when there are pauses in the speech. For improved communication with older

adults—or anyone over the age of 50—the speaker should use pauses and phrases to allow the listener to "catch up." Compare that recommendation with the typical, rapid-fire speech of sports announcers and flight attendants!

Of course, understanding rapid speech is even more difficult if you have a hearing loss. People with hearing loss say that understanding *fast* speech is harder than understanding *soft* speech. To make it easier, ask the speakers around you to:

- **Speak at a normal rate** (speaking *slowly* is not helpful; just don't speak *fast*)
  - **Use pauses**
  - **Face me when you talk to me**
- On a positive note, cognitive abilities, memory and hearing can be preserved and even improved by exercising these functions—the "use it or lose it" principle. Researchers have pointed out:

*"An active, engaged lifestyle, including intellectually stimulating activities, helps maintain our health and cognitive (and hearing) abilities."*



Some people talk so fast it feels as if you're racing to keep up.

## Tips for Using Your Cell Phone

Are you thinking of buying a new cell phone?

FCC regulations require cell phones to be rated for possible interference with hearing aids and for compatibility with hearing aids that have telecoils. Cell phones with an M3 or M4 rating are less likely to cause hearing aid interference. Cell phones with a T3 or T4 rating should work well with telecoils.

### Try before purchasing

Anyone purchasing a cell phone should try it out first. Retail mobile phone outlets are required to have several hearing aid compatible models. Be sure to understand the store's return policy before purchase.

### Phone accessories

Cell phone accessories can provide convenience and improved sound quality:

- **Bluetooth** technology allows a wireless connection between your cell phone and the Bluetooth receiver, which can be a regular earpiece or a hearing aid.
- **Neckloops** plug into the cell phone to use with your hearing aid's telecoil.
- **Direct audio input** uses a wire connection to send the cell phone output directly to your hearing aid.

Fortunately, since all cell phones have a volume control, most hearing aid users can use their cell phone without any special accessory.



## Give A Special Gift Of Hearing

We all look forward to the holidays. We go to parties, family gatherings and other special events. Your hearing aids help you enjoy these holiday events, even if sometimes these get-togethers are too noisy!

There are millions of people who *could* hear better, but don't. Many people are reluctant to admit they have a hearing problem. With the proper help, most of these people could hear significantly better, making life more enjoyable for them *and* their family and friends.

You can help someone you know by sharing your experiences and passing along this newsletter. Tell them how hearing aids and professional hearing healthcare have improved *your* life... it could become a *special gift of hearing*.

*Thank you for the gift of your trust and confidence that you have placed in us. We wish you and your family a Happy and Healthy 2010.*

Sincerely,

The Audiologists, Dispensers and Staff of Hillcrest Hearing Aids

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**We now accept used hearing aid batteries for recycling.**

## Captioned Telephone Services

The telephone can be a particular challenge for people with hearing loss. Today, captioned telephone service (such as CapTel) allows people with even severe hearing loss to carry on phone conversations. The service is free of charge, thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

CapTel is like watching captioned television or movies. It allows you to both hear the voice and read captions of the caller's words by providing text captions on a CapTel telephone or on a computer screen.

The system uses your regular phone and internet service. When you place a call, the phone also connects to the captioning service. As the person talks to you, the captioning service—using advanced speech recognition technology—transcribes everything the caller

says into written text that appears on a display. The captions appear at almost the same time as you hear the caller's voice.

The system can also use a special phone (such as the CapTel 800i) that connects to both your telephone service and the internet. The CapTel phone eliminates the need to use a phone and computer at the same time.

In 2008, Hamilton Mobile CapTel introduced the first single-phone, *mobile* captioned telephone service designed specifically for people with hearing loss. Mobile CapTel users are able to read the captions on an iPhone screen while using a hardwired or Bluetooth headset to listen to the caller.

For more information, please call us, or visit [www.hamiltoncaptel.com](http://www.hamiltoncaptel.com).

## Seeing Sound in Color

A small percentage of people, including composer Franz Liszt and author Vladimir Nabokov, actually "see" sounds in color.

*Synesthesia* is a phenomenon where people experience a mixing of their senses. Someone with auditory/visual synesthesia might actually see blue when he hears a violin, or see red when he hears the speech sound "s".

This ability appears to run in families and occurs in less than 1% of people. Recent research has identified a genetic base for it by studying 196 individuals in 43 families who all reported seeing colors when they heard certain sounds.