

Hillcrest Healthcare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

Fall 2011

Hearing Loss And Dementia

A recent study found that *untreated* hearing loss may increase the risk of dementia.

Investigators from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine published the findings in the February 2011 issue of *Archives of Neurology*. According to the researchers, "for individuals older than 60 years, more than one third of the risk of dementia was associated with hearing loss."

The study suggests that successful treatment of hearing loss in adults can minimize the risk of dementia.

The researchers recommended that "the risk of dementia can be prevented or minimized through the use of hearing aids or cochlear implants."

More and more studies are proving that untreated hearing loss can have serious negative, but almost invisible, effects on both the family and the person with the hearing loss. Previous research has found that people with hearing loss who do not seek help are about 50% more likely to experience social isolation, depression and anxiety.

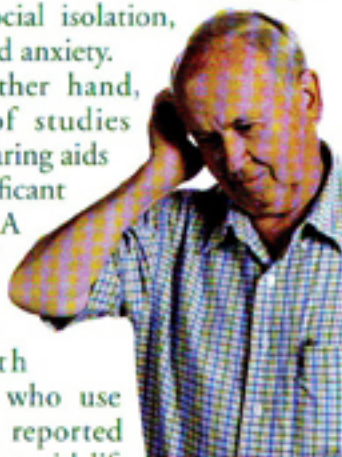
On the other hand, a number of studies prove that hearing aids provide significant benefits. A University of Iowa study found that adults with hearing loss who use hearing aids reported more satisfaction with life and less depression than those who did not use hearing aids.

Another study of more than 4,000 adults who have hearing loss found that those who use hearing aids report:

- > better family relationships
- > greater independence
- > improved social life

Family members reported even greater improvements in these areas than did the hearing aid users themselves.

Fortunately, hearing loss can be successfully treated through the use of hearing aids. Unfortunately, hearing loss remains the most common untreated problem in adults over 50 years of age. It often goes undetected for several years because the loss develops very gradually and not all sounds are affected.



Your Hearing Aids Source of Power

Every hearing aid has a microphone, an amplifier and a miniature speaker. Most of today's hearing aids also have sophisticated microprocessors—basically a miniature computer. All these vital electronic components need a source of constant and dependable power. The source of that dependable power is the *hearing aid battery*.

Running on air

Years ago, hearing aid batteries contained as much as 50% mercury. Because mercury is toxic and harmful to the environment, in the late 1970's the amount of mercury in batteries was reduced to about 3.5%. By the mid 1990's, that level was reduced even further to about 1%. Battery manufacturers have worked for several years to eliminate even that last 1% of mercury and now hearing aid batteries are available with absolutely no mercury.

Modern hearing aid batteries now use zinc as their major component. Their second major ingredient—*air*—is free, of course, and comes from *outside* the battery. Because only one ingredient is packaged *within* the battery, twice as much of that ingredient can be used. As a result, the zinc

Don't Let This Happen to You

The refusal to take advantage of help available in the form of devices such as hearing aids and eyeglasses is the second most common mistake older adults make in caring for their health, according to the Institute for Healthcare Advancement (www.ih4health.org).

Other common mistakes:

- ❑ Refusing to discuss intimate health problems with your doctor;
- ❑ Not understanding the medical explanation or treatment plan;
- ❑ Not having a single physician or healthcare provider to oversee your overall care;
- ❑ Not paying attention to early warning signs.

And the most common error cited by the Institute? Operating a car when it is no longer safe to do so.

air battery lasts more than twice as long as an old-fashioned mercury battery.

Battery life

Although improvements have led to longer battery life, the movement to smaller and more sophisticated hearing aids has offset some of this gain. Much of the reduction in hearing aid size is due to downsizing of the battery.

Many hearing aids now use the small #312 battery (about 20% of the size of the once popular #675), or even the tiny #10 battery (1/10 the size). In other words, as battery life has increased, battery size has decreased, enabling manufacturers to design smaller hearing aids. Today's small canal hearing aid, including the battery, is about the same size and weight as the #675 battery that was commonly used years ago!

Battery tip: When you remove the paper tape from your battery, stick the tape on that date on a calendar. You'll know how old the battery is simply by looking at the calendar.

Battery labels: Many battery brands use the letters "Z" (zinc), "A" (air) or "ZA" (zinc air) after the number (for example, #13A). While the number is important, the letters are not, since all hearing aid batteries are zinc air.

Save Money: Get Hearing Aids

Hearing aids can be expensive, but not getting help for hearing loss can cost even more.

A study of 40,000 households found that the loss in annual income for not treating hearing loss can approach \$30,000. There is also a strong relationship between degree of hearing loss and unemployment among those who did not use hearing aids.

The national study by the Better Hearing Institute (BHI) found that using hearing aids reduced the risk of loss in income by about 75%.

"When unaddressed, hearing loss negatively affects individuals and their families in the form of lost wages, lost promotions and lost opportunities," according to Sergei Kochkin, Ph.D., director of BHI. For more information, visit www.betterhearing.org.



The size 675 battery on the left is about 10 times larger than the popular size 10 on the right. Photo courtesy of Ray-O-Vac.

The Heart Of A Hearing Aid

A hearing aid is made up of many electronic parts all necessary for it to function. Do you know about the **HEART** of a hearing aid? It is at the core of this function and it starts beating when you say, "Yes, I need help with my hearing." It beats stronger when you can now hear the special people in your life. What happens when the device stops working and needs to be replaced? These old units can be donated, allowing that heart to continue beating and providing the gift of hearing to someone else.

In October, **Allen Massie**, Hearing Instrument Specialist with HHH & BC will go on his **fifteenth** medical mission to Peru. *With your support, hundreds of people will receive the gift of hearing. Donated hearing aids can be dropped off at any of our six locations. You'll keep the heart beating of these old devices and make a difference in someone else's life!*

Sincerely,

The Audiologists, Dispensers and Staff of Hillcrest Hearing Aids & Balance Center
950 E. Alex Bell Rd. 369 W. First Street, #406 9000 North Main Street, #319
Centerville, OH 45459 Dayton, OH 45402 Dayton, OH 45415
(937) 435-7476 (937) 222-0022 (937) 832-3582

1861 Towne Park Drive, #H
Troy, OH 45373
(937) 222-0022

1189 Wayne Avenue
Greenville, OH 45331
(937) 222-0022

WWW.HILLCRESTHEARING.COM

Cell Phones for Hearing Aid Users

Some hearing aid users have difficulty using cell phones, even if their hearing aids have telecoils that amplify the phone signal.

Retail mobile phone outlets are required to have several hearing aid compatible models—ask the manager if the salesperson is not familiar with them. Cell phones with a **T3** or **T4** rating should work well with hearing aid telecoils. We recommend trying out a cell phone before buying it.

Phone accessories

Most hearing aid users can use a cell phone without any special accessory, especially since cell phones have a volume control. Some accessories to consider are:

- **Bluetooth** technology allows a wireless connection between your cell phone and

the Bluetooth receiver, which can be a small speaker, an earworn device, or hearing aids with "connectivity."

- **Neckloops** plug into the headset jack of the cell phone to use with your hearing aid's telecoil.
- **Direct audio input** uses a hardwire connection from the cell phone directly into your hearing aid.
- **Texting** allows you to read (rather than hear) the incoming message.
- **Captioned mobile phones** (such as the *Hamilton CapTel* shown on the right) use a voice recognition program to translate regular voice calls into text that is displayed on the phone's screen.



The Hamilton CapTel mobile phone translates speech into text. Photo courtesy of Oaktree Products.