

Hillcrest HealthCare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

Spring 2011

Automatic Hearing

People with normal hearing can usually hear "automatically." It doesn't take much effort and they don't have to pay close attention. They don't have to use much "brain power," unless they're trying to hear in a group or in a noisy restaurant.

But most people with hearing loss no longer have "automatic hearing." If you have a hearing loss, you have to pay close attention, you have to concentrate, and you have to use some of your "brain power" to figure out what someone said. All this takes effort and energy, and you just can't do it all day long.

Hearing takes attention and energy, and it's tiring to do it all day long.

That means you may not hear as well if you're tired, if you're under stress, or if you're thinking about something else. You may have more difficulty hearing if you're having other health problems, or you're just not feeling well.

Feel better, hear better

Hearing aids allow you to hear better, of course. But perhaps it's just as important that hearing aids also allow you to hear with *less effort* and *less energy*. Hearing aids allow you to be more relaxed as you communicate with the people around you.

You'll also hear better and more easily if those around you get your attention before speaking to you. Then you can be prepared to use some of that "brain power."

So the next time someone says, "You can hear me when you really want to," you can correct them: "No, you mean I can hear better when I really work at it."

Does Your Doctor Look for Hearing Loss?

Family physicians can play an important role in identifying hearing loss in adults. Unfortunately, many physicians don't screen for hearing loss.

You can help by encouraging your own physician to look for hearing loss in his or her own patients. Screening can be as easy as asking a few questions, or as involved as actual hearing testing, and we would be happy to make suggestions.

Regardless of the approach, your doctor may appreciate hearing about your own experiences and the important difference good hearing healthcare has made in your life.

Our Hearing Healthcare Partnership

Good hearing healthcare is based on a partnership between you and us.

Our job is to work with you to make sure you're hearing as well as possible. We can't cure your hearing loss, but we can evaluate your hearing, talk with you about the many kinds of help available, and work with you and your family to minimize your hearing difficulties.

As your partner, we want to know as much as possible about your hearing. That includes your ability to understand words, your sensitivity to loud sounds, and how much you're affected by background noise. We also want to know about your particular hearing needs, such as hearing in groups, while watching television, or on the telephone.

Once some decisions are made about such things as hearing aids or other assistive listening devices, we'll work

with you to make sure you're getting the maximum benefits and that you're hearing as well as possible.

What's your role?

The other partner—the more important partner—is *you*. Just as a professional fitness trainer can't do all the exercises for you, we can't do the hearing healthcare for you. *You* have to decide how well you want to hear. *You* have to decide how much effort you want to devote to hearing as well as possible. *You* have to decide if your hearing is worth regular check-ups and regular use of the best available hearing aids.

For example, hearing aids are available in many different sizes, styles, levels of technology—and at many different costs. We can tell you the pros and cons of each, but *you* have to decide which hearing aids you want.



We're proud to be on your hearing healthcare team.

Keep Your Hearing Healthy

As you know, we encourage you to schedule regular hearing check-ups. That's because it's not unusual to have small changes in hearing, changes you may not be aware of because they happen so gradually, or because only certain sounds are affected.

If we find any change in your hearing test results, a minor "re-tuning" of your hearing aids can result in better hearing for you.

At your hearing healthcare check-up, we also:

- *Check your ear canals for earwax.* Excessive earwax can interfere with hearing and cause damage to hearing aids.
- *Clean your hearing aids.* Regular cleaning minimizes hearing aid repairs and makes sure that your hearing aids are providing the maximum benefit.
- *Review other sources of help.* This is a good time to talk about telephone amplifiers, clock and smoke alarms, and assistive devices for television, including the new wireless technology.

Your hearing deserves good care! Please call our office if you would like to schedule an appointment.

From your hearing healthcare partner

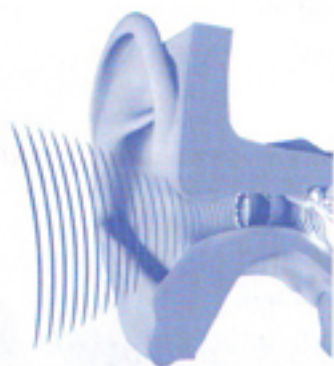
We've seen exciting progress in hearing care technology in the past few years. With the kind of help available today, and through good teamwork, a person with hearing loss can do surprisingly well, even though his or her hearing loss isn't actually cured. We hope our hearing healthcare partnership is working well for you.

Quieter TV Commercials Are on the Way – Finally!

Viewers have complained for decades that television commercials are too loud, often abrasively louder than the programs they're sponsoring. That's why many people immediately press "mute" at commercial time.

In the United States, Congress finally passed legislation to do something about that complaint. The *Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation* (or CALM) Act requires the Federal Communications Commission to establish regulations so that broadcasters process and transmit the audio signal more uniformly. Several countries, including Australia, Brazil and France, have already regulated the loudness of television commercials.

The Invisible Lyric® Breakthrough



The world's first and only 100% invisible extended wear hearing device is now available! The *Lyric*® is a completely new way to treat hearing loss. This device is worn deep inside the ear canal placed by a trained *Lyric* professional and can be worn 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for up to 3-4 months at a time. The *Lyric* device is truly a breakthrough in hearing solutions! This device is worn during daily activities even during showering, exercising and sleeping. There are no batteries to change and no maintenance needed. It uses the ear's natural anatomy to minimize background noise and provide clear and natural sound quality. It is being fit currently only in our Centerville location. Not everyone is a candidate for this device so call for an appointment to find out if the *Lyric* device is right for you!

Also, plan on joining us in supporting the **3rd Annual WALK4HEARING**, May 21st, Carillon Park. Visit www.WALK4HEARING.org or call 424-8519.

Sincerely,

The Audiologists, Dispensers and Staff of Hillcrest Hearing Aids & Balance Center

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Be It Ever So Humble . . .

People often complain about how noisy some restaurants are. True enough—but your own home can also be a very noisy place.

First there are the sounds coming from *outside*, such as barking dogs, car horns, traffic, lawnmowers and leaf blowers. Then there are the sounds from *within* your home: air conditioners, vacuum cleaners, hair dryers, television, and the clatter of dishes and silverware.

These noises affect us in a number of ways, from increased stress levels to difficulty hearing, and even to permanent hearing loss.

For example, sound level measurements of common kitchen sounds indicate the kitchen is a very noisy place! Putting dishes away, or placing dishes and silverware on a counter, can create noise in the range of

85 to 95 decibel (dB) on the A scale. Peak levels can occur up to 105 dB (A), so it's not surprising that many people describe these kitchen noises as *irritating*. For comparison, speech is about 65 dB (A) and the EPA rates sound at 90 dB (A) as "very annoying" to most people.

Noise and hearing loss

Most people don't like noise and loud sounds. Unfortunately, people with hearing loss are often *more* sensitive to loud sounds and bothered more by background noise.

Today's hearing aids can compensate for a person's increased sensitivity to noise and loud sounds. One approach is to program the instrument to amplify less as sounds get louder—and to not amplify *at all* when sounds get very loud. Of course, the sounds will still be loud because they *are* loud.

So the next time you're in the kitchen or by the washing machine, and the clatter and noise is bothering you, you're not alone. You and the sound level meter agree: *your home can be a noisy place!*

Did You Know?

- Whales use their ultra-low frequency hearing for long distance underwater navigation.
- Two words in the English language have all five vowels in order (*abstemious* and *facetious*).
- Sharks replace their teeth every few weeks to few months. Some sharks producing an estimated 30,000 teeth in their lifetime.