

# Hillcrest HealthCare News<sup>®</sup>

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends



Winter 2012

## Don't Create Obstacles To Good Hearing

Many people often put self-imposed obstacles in the way of good hearing. Have you created any of these barriers for yourself?

### Choosing to hear from only one ear

People use hearing aids because they have to, not because they *want* to. Still, many people with hearing loss in both ears compromise good hearing by using a hearing aid in only one ear.

Some people use only one hearing aid because it's less expensive. Others feel that using one hearing aid means they "need some help," while using two hearing aids means they're really "handicapped." Unfortunately, these people end up having more hearing difficulties because they don't want to look handicapped.

### Have you created any of these barriers to good hearing?

If you use only one hearing aid when you have a loss in both ears, you put an obstacle between yourself and good hearing. *One hearing aid can't help both ears!*

### Choosing appearance over better hearing

It's natural to want anything we use to look as nice as possible. But someone who chooses the appearance of hearing aids as their *primary* concern may be creating another barrier.

There are many different styles and sizes of hearing aids, some of which are virtually invisible. For many people, these hearing aids are not a compromise.

For other people, however, certain styles or sizes of hearing aids *are* a compromise because of the nature of their hearing loss. That doesn't mean that the less visible hearing aids won't be helpful. Rather, one style of hearing aid may be more helpful than another style.

### Choosing cost over better hearing

There is a large range in the cost and capability of hearing aids. Today, there are very good digital hearing aids available at a more reasonable cost than ever. For many, these less expensive hearing aids are not a significant compromise.

For others, however, hearing aids with higher levels of technology and greater speech processing capabilities allow them to understand speech more clearly and more comfortably. Is the improved hearing worth it? Only you can decide.

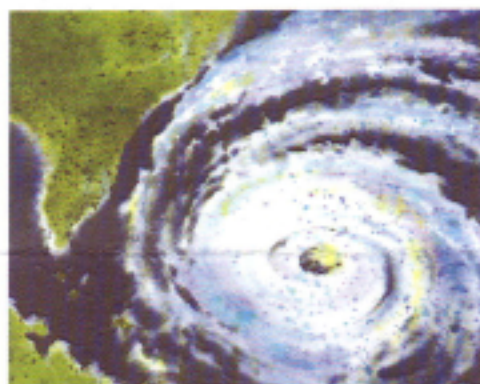
### It's your choice

Our job is to review all the options available to you and help you choose what is best for you and your hearing.

## Are You Prepared for Emergencies?

Tornadoes, thunderstorms, snowstorms and power outages—thankfully, these are rare occurrences. Whatever the emergency, **communication** is a key ingredient for coping with emergency situations.

Good communication is crucial for keeping informed and staying in touch with family, friends and emergency personnel. People with hearing loss may face a greater challenge during emergency conditions. Here are some things to think about as part of your emergency preparedness:



### Can I reach my friends and my family?

Every household should have at least one phone that will work during a power outage. The phone should have a built-in or attachable amplifier if needed.

**Will my cell phone work?** In an emergency, making cell phone calls may be difficult because of overloaded circuits. *Text messages* are more likely to get through busy circuits. Even if the message is not sent immediately, it's "in-line" to be sent when the line is available.

**Will I be able to send and receive e-mails and get news on-line?** Install a back-up battery and power surge protector for your

computer in case of a power outage.

**Will I be able to get news bulletins?** Television stations are required to broadcast emergency warnings visually, as well as with sound (such as the "crawlers" at the bottom on the screen).

A good transistor radio means you won't be dependent on television. Special radio receivers are available that provide text information from the National Weather Service broadcasts ([www.WeatherRadios.com](http://www.WeatherRadios.com)).

**Should I have a buddy system?** It's a good idea to have a nearby family member or friend to stay in touch with in case of an emergency. However, it's unreliable to count on someone else to alert you—they may be away or unreachable themselves.

**Do I have enough emergency lighting?** You should have several battery-operated flashlights or lanterns. Some models can be left plugged into your household current and come on automatically in case of a power failure.

Emergencies happen rarely, but it still makes sense to follow the Scout approach—*be prepared.*

## Hearing Better All The Time

Some people only use their hearing aids "when they have to," such as when they're with a group of people or in a noisy place. But the people who are most comfortable and who receive the most benefit from their hearing aids are the ones who use them full-time. That's why we encourage you to use your hearing aids—and your hearing—full-time, even in easy listening situations and even when you're alone.

### What is full-time hearing?

Hearing is like exercise—the more you use it, the better shape it's in. That's because your ears and your brain become used to a certain "sound world." Someone with untreated hearing loss becomes used to a less stimulating sound world. Their ears aren't being "exercised" regularly by all the speech, music, and noise around them. They're also not using their brain as much as they could to understand speech and other sounds around them.

When you use your hearing aids full-time, your ears and brain become used to hearing

the sounds around you. You become more comfortable with these sounds and better at understanding them, including the sounds of speech.

If you use your hearing aids only when you go out, or when you watch television, you may use them only a few hours a day. When you're using your hearing aids, you might hear 90% of the sound environment. When you're not using them, you might hear only 50% of the environment. Which environment do your ears and brain adjust to? (*Answer: neither.*)



Our recommendation: Keep your hearing in good shape! Let your ears develop the habit of better hearing *full-time* by using your hearing aids *full-time*.

## Give A Special Gift Of Hearing

The holiday season is a good time to give a special gift to a friend or relative. 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*. We want to thank you for *your* gift of trust and confidence you have placed in us and wish you and your family "**Happy holidays and best wishes for the New Year!**"

Sincerely,

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

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## The Tale of Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith

Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith, two golfing buddies, both have hearing loss. Mr. Jones' loss is more severe than that of his friend Mr. Smith, but he actually hears better and has fewer hearing difficulties than his golf pal.

### Tinnitus Help

Tinnitus is the ringing or buzzing sounds that a person hears when no outside sound is actually present. It can be a disturbing and upsetting phenomenon.

Tinnitus treatments include tinnitus maskers, biofeedback, cognitive behavioral therapy, habituation therapy, hearing aids, medication and tinnitus maskers.

For more information, contact the American Tinnitus Association at (503) 248-9985 (or go to [www.ata.org](http://www.ata.org)). The Consumer Handbook on Tinnitus is available by calling (928) 284-0860.

That's because Mr. Jones took all the right steps. He acknowledged and accepted his hearing loss. He sought professional care and regularly uses his two hearing aids. He told his family and friends about his hearing problem and let them know what they can do to help him hear and understand as well as possible. When he goes to a noisy restaurant he understands that he may not hear well in that setting. He gets a hearing check-up every year to make sure he's hearing as well as possible.

Mr. Smith has a milder hearing loss than his golfing friend, but he has more hearing difficulties and he struggles more with everyday communication. He hasn't fully accepted that he has a hearing loss and frequently complains that people are mumbling.

Although Mr. Smith has loss in both ears, he uses only one hearing aid, but only "when

he has to." His wife and children know about his hearing loss, but he hasn't told his friends or co-workers. Most of them know he has a hearing loss anyway, but they don't know how important it is to face him, to get his attention before speaking, or that noise has a much greater effect on him.

Unfortunately, this is not a fairy tale. There are more Mr. Smiths in the world than Mr. Joneses. The help available today for people with hearing loss is truly remarkable—but only if you seek it out.

If you know someone like Mr. Smith, please give him this newsletter. It might be an important step to better hearing.

**Battery warning:** Batteries can be harmful if swallowed. If someone swallows a battery, call your physician or the National Battery Hotline at (202) 625-3333.