



## Music is Good for Your Hearing

As we get older, even people with normal hearing begin to notice difficulty understanding speech in noisy settings or when someone speaks too quickly. A recent study suggests that playing a musical instrument may lessen that trend.

While the hearing sensitivity of adults was similar in the musician and non-musician groups of older adults (defined as 50 years of age and older), the musician group was significantly better at understanding speech in noise settings. The researchers suggested that the musicians lifetime of practicing and playing musical instruments provided lasting benefits to the central auditory system.

### Under-stimulation

Previous studies reported similar findings that our ability to understand speech may decline through lack of

stimulation. In these studies, individuals who had hearing loss in both ears but used only one hearing aid experienced a gradual decline in speech recognition ability in the unaided ear. Researchers call this *auditory deprivation*.

Auditory deprivation also appears to occur in individuals with hearing loss who don't use *any* amplification. This may also explain why the person who puts off getting hearing aids may experience more difficulty adjusting to amplification. It may be that auditory deprivation of *both* ears makes the adjustment more difficult because of the many years of reduced hearing ability.

### Hearing and thinking

The lack of auditory stimulation also appears to

affect brain function. A Johns Hopkins study of adults with *untreated* hearing loss found that "for each 10 decibel loss in hearing, the risk of dementia rose about 20 percent." The researchers attributed the increased risk to social isolation and to demands placed on the brain to devote energy to hear at the expense of other brain functions.

The good news is that a number of studies have demonstrated that hearing aids prevent, minimize or reverse the negative social and emotional effects of untreated hearing loss. And in a 2011 study, new hearing aid users showed

significant improvement in short term memory and learning ability six months after getting hearing aids.

It appears that music—and hearing aids—are good for your hearing and good for your brain.



**Music—and hearing aids—are good for your ears and good for your brain.**



## Talk to Your Baby

Infants as young as nine months of age can recognize speech as different from other sounds around them.

The researchers studied the responses of babies to recorded sounds of words, birds and various noises. When speech was presented, the babies looked longer at pictures of adult females than at other pictures.

In the United States, more than 90% of newborn infants are screened for hearing before leaving the hospital. Early identification is important because language specialists consider the early years critical for speech and language development.

The study was published in the June 2012 issue of *Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

## Family Help for a Family Issue

A recent article in the *Washington Post* suggested a solution to an age-old problem.

Although hearing loss can occur at any age, it becomes more common as we get older. In fact, the hearing of a typical 40-year old is already slightly poorer than the hearing of a typical 18-year old.

According to the *Washington Post* article, many family members talk louder or tolerate loud television because their parent or grandparent refuses to accept that he or she has a hearing loss. But that approach only allows the person to mistakenly believe there is no problem. *Denial* is probably the greatest obstacle to good hearing health care.

A recent survey by AARP and the American Speech Language Association found that half of adults with hearing loss said family gatherings were difficult. Seventy-five per cent said they felt left out because of hearing issues.

The survey also found a potential solution for the problem of denial. While only about 25% of respondents said they would raise the issue of hearing themselves, more than half said they would seek help if a family member asked them to do so.

The solution? Rather than speaking louder, a family member who encourages a spouse or parent or grandparent to seek professional help may be taking the most effective step toward better hearing.

### Open-Fit Hearing Aids

The open-fit hearing aid is a growing trend in hearing aid fitting. This approach is particularly effective for people with milder hearing loss or high-frequency loss. For these people, the chief complaint is speech *clarity*, not loudness.

The open fitting approach is not new, but advances in digital processing, feedback control and earmold tubing technology have made it a successful fitting for many more people than in the past. The technique places nothing in the ear canal other than a thin tube with a small dome or speaker.

The hearing aid itself is a very small, lightweight instrument worn behind the ear. Because the ear canal remains open, many users forget they are using hearing aids.

Some describe this approach as like getting "reading glasses for the ear." It's appropriate for people with milder degrees of hearing loss. In many cases, however, people with more significant hearing loss can also use open-fit hearing aids successfully.

## Does Listening Make You Tired?

People with normal hearing are able to hear automatically, at least most of the time. They don't have to listen carefully, unless they're in a noisy restaurant or with a group of people. In these settings, even people with normal hearing have to work at hearing and understanding.

Most people with hearing loss no longer have the ability to hear automatically, even in easy listening situations. They have to pay close attention, listen carefully, and *concentrate*. This takes energy, and you just can't do it all day long. People with unidentified hearing loss may not even realize just how much extra energy they're devoting to hearing.

Because listening takes extra attention and energy, 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

have other health problems, or are just not feeling well.

Hearing aids allow you to hear better, of course. But hearing aids also allow you to hear with *less effort* and *less energy*. They allow you to be more relaxed as you communicate with the people around you.

**"Hearing aids allow you to hear with less effort and less energy."**

On the other hand, if you're ready to hear, if you're paying attention—you can hear better when you really want to or need to. You just can't do it full-time.

Our suggestion: ask the people around you to get your attention before speaking to you. You'll be prepared to look at them, to pay attention—and you'll be hearing and understanding as well as possible.

### Definition of a Hearing Aid

- > A miniature electronic device that must amplify sound a million times but bring in no noise
- > A complex, custom-fit electronic device that works in an environment of perspiration, humidity, earwax and repeated handling
- > A device that should amplify only the voices you want to hear at that moment
- > Something you put off getting for years, but can't do without for 30 minutes when it needs servicing.

*adapted from S. Lybarger*

## A New Year

We are grateful for our many blessings and especially for the trust and confidence that you have placed in us by allowing us to serve your hearing health care needs.

To provide you with the highest quality of services and care, we are excited to announce the relocation of our downtown office in February 2013! We want to assure you of the continuity of your care and look forward to seeing you in our new location **1222 South Patterson Boulevard, at the corner of Stewart Street and Patterson Boulevard across from the Dayton Marriott hotel.**

Please look for Open House announcements in the coming New Year!

**We wish you and your family a Happy and Healthy 2013!**

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 1189 Wayne Avenue  
Troy, OH 45373 Greenville, OH 45331  
(937) 222-0022 (937) 222-0022

[WWW.HILLCRESTHEARING.COM](http://WWW.HILLCRESTHEARING.COM)