

Hillcrest HealthCare News®

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

Spring 2015

Work Less, Hear More

Why do you use hearing aids? So you hear better, of course. That's obvious.

But another important benefit is that when you use hearing aids, hearing and understanding takes less work and less energy. Less work and less energy means you're less tired and feel less stress.

Even so, a person with hearing loss no longer has "automatic hearing." He or she has to pay close attention, concentrate, and use brain power to figure out what someone said. All this takes effort and energy. Hearing aids significantly reduce the need to concentrate and work at hearing.

We know that people who don't seek help for their hearing loss spend more effort and more energy on *hearing*, even if they are able to "get by." They're using some of their brain power to fill in what they don't hear.

Hearing aids allow you to hear with less effort and less energy

This effort "to get by" can make the person more tired, more anxious, and more stressed—and possibly more depressed.

Relax—and hear better

So perhaps it's just as important that hearing aids 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 and understanding doesn't tire you out.

You'll also hear better and more easily if those around you get your attention before speaking to you. Then you can pay attention, look at the person talking, and let your hearing and understanding happen—almost automatically.

Welcome

...to the Spring issue of our patient newsletter. We hope you find the information both interesting and helpful.

If you would prefer not to receive the newsletter, please let us know. On the other hand, if you know someone who would enjoy reading it, pass it on, or give us their name and address and we'll send them a copy.

Our practice is based on three principles:

- **Hearing loss is serious**
- **Hearing loss deserves professional care**
- **Hearing aids work**

Myths About Hearing Loss

Hearing problems are rare.

Hearing loss is actually quite common, affecting about 10% of the population, and is one of the most common chronic conditions in people over 50 years of age. Because it's invisible, someone with a hearing loss doesn't look any different—you probably walk by people with hearing loss every day and don't notice it (or their hearing aids).

Hearing loss is a sign of old age.

It's true there's a greater incidence of hearing loss in the over-50 age group (but that's not old age!). But hearing loss also occurs in infants and children. The difference is that children almost always get early treatment for their hearing loss, while adults tend to postpone getting help for several years. This can make it difficult to adjust to hearing aids and create stress and tension with family and friends.

You can't test hearing in young children.

Most newborn babies have their hearing screened *before they leave the hospital*. The

Your Healthy Hearing Check-up

Regular hearing health check-ups ensure that you're hearing as well as possible. Your hearing check-up includes the following:

- 1. Hearing test.** We'll compare the results to your previous hearing levels. If we find any change, we'll recommend treatment or adjust your hearing aids to compensate for the change. Many people find they hear a little better after this adjustment.
- 2. Ear canal examination.** Earwax is one of the most common causes of hearing aid feedback (whistle) and hearing aid repairs.
- 3. Cleaning and adjusting your hearing aids.** Regular cleaning minimizes hearing aid repairs and makes sure that your hearing aids are providing the maximum benefit. *Sometimes cleaning and re-programming of your hearing aids can make a noticeable improvement.*
- 4. Reviewing other sources of help.** This is a good time to ask about telephone amplifiers, clock and smoke alarms, and devices for television and group settings.

Your hearing deserves good care! Please call our office to schedule an appointment.



Most newborns have their hearing tested before leaving the hospital.

testing uses computer-generated sounds and analysis to measure the automatic reaction of the ear and auditory system. More than 90% of babies born in the United States now receive this hearing screening before discharge from the hospital.

The purpose of early identification is to begin treatment as soon as possible. Treatment includes medical and audiologic evaluation, amplification (hearing aids or cochlear implants), speech and language therapy, family counseling and early education.

Alexander Graham Bell invented the hearing aid.

Not exactly—he invented the telephone as a teaching device for deaf students. But many of the subsequent developments for the telephone (such as microphones, amplifiers and speakers) were vital in the development of the first electrical hearing aids in the early part of the 20th century.

Later developments, such as the transistor and the microchip, eventually led hearing aids into the digital age. Thanks to 21st century technology, we now have hearing aids that are custom-fit to each individual hearing pattern, respond automatically to the sounds around them, amplify soft sounds but not loud sounds, and become directional when speech is present.

If people didn't mumble, I wouldn't have a hearing problem.

For most people with hearing loss, the *clarity* of speech is more of a problem than *loudness*. Sensorineural hearing loss—the type most commonly seen in adults—is caused by damage to the inner ear, resulting in distortion of speech sounds. This makes it more difficult to understand speech. This is especially true in noisy settings, even when speech is loud enough.

Digital hearing aids help with this distortion by amplifying sounds you *don't* hear, while not amplifying sounds you *can* hear. They can amplify soft sounds a lot while amplifying loud sounds much less (or not at all).

What they cannot do, however, is restore normal hearing. On the other hand, with today's high-tech hearing aids and professional care, even those with significant hearing loss are able to hear fairly well *most of the time*.

Untreated Hearing Loss Can Cost You \$\$

We know that not getting help for hearing loss can affect a person's quality of life, including a person's feelings of isolation, fatigue and stress. Recent research also suggests that untreated hearing loss increases the risk of the onset of dementia.

Apparently not seeking help for hearing loss can also affect a person's pocketbook.

Survey data from the Better Hearing Institute suggests that *untreated* hearing loss accounts for about \$100 billion in lost income every year. The study estimated that lost income for untreated loss averaged from \$1,000 a year for someone with a mild loss to \$12,000 a year for those with severe loss. The study did not include the social or emotional "cost" of the negative effects on family and friends.

Effective hearing is important in many

work settings. Verbal communication with co-workers, employers and customers may be an important part of a worker's responsibilities. Hearing may also be a safety issue in some settings.

The loss in income apparently is due to underemployment, higher rates of unemployment, job mistakes and poorer job performance due to communication errors and the stress, anxiety and depression that untreated hearing loss can cause. Those emotional factors may affect job performance.

On the other hand, hearing loss is not associated with a higher rate of retirement when related factors such as age, gender and health status are accounted for.

According to former BHI director Sergei Kochkin, Ph.D., the loss in income is cut

in half for hearing aid users. As he put it:

"Some people may be embarrassed to admit they have a hearing loss. But the price of vanity is lost earnings and a diminished ability to communicate effectively with family, friends and co-workers."

So tell your friends: getting help for hearing loss not only improves your quality of life—it's a good investment.

Did you know?

Smokers and people with high blood pressure are 75% more likely to have hearing loss.

Battery tip: After you remove the paper tape from a battery, wait about a minute before using it. This allows the battery to charge fully from the surrounding air.



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Meeting Your Needs

When you or your loved one struggles to hear, we know that you have a choice in treatment options. *Hillcrest* values the confidence that you place in our abilities to provide comprehensive, medically based care to you. Thank you for the professional relationship we have with you!

As part of *Southwest Ohio ENT Specialists*, we are unique in the Miami Valley with our full range of hearing services. Our team of physicians, audiologists and staff work together to recommend solutions that meets your specific needs.

For more than fifty years, Hillcrest has served the Miami Valley. You can trust that in this ever-changing healthcare environments, we are here to stay.

If it's been more than six months since we have seen you, it's time to schedule an appointment. Please call us at 937-999-2314. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,

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

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