

Hearing HealthCare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends



Summer 2014

Most Common Causes of Hearing Loss in Adults

Hearing loss is one of the most common problems in adults (only arthritis and hypertension are more common). Several studies suggest that hearing loss is *the most common untreated problem* in men and women over 50 years of age.

The most common causes of hearing loss in adults are:

Presbycusis. The aging process is the most common cause of hearing loss—and people *are* living longer. The typical loss develops very slowly in both ears, so slowly that the person doesn't notice any change. At first the *clarity* of speech is affected more than the *loudness*.

Noise. Exposure to moderate levels of noise over a long period of time, or to brief high-intensity sounds, can lead to sensorineural hearing loss. The loss is often accompanied by *tinnitus* (ringing, hissing or other noises in the ear). Sources of toxic noise levels include household appliances, lawnmowers, city traffic, guns, loud music and personal headsets (such as those used with cell phones).

Genetics. Inherited sensorineural hearing loss can occur at any age, including in adulthood. The ear is the most genetically complex organ in the human body, and nearly 20% of our genes are involved in the human inner ear. Scientists estimate that there are 150 to 200 genes that, when damaged, could lead to hearing loss.

Most cases of adult hearing loss are probably a combination of these causes. Much of "age-related hearing loss" may actually be due to more years of exposure to noise and other environmental causes, such as smoking and environmental pollutants. Additional "age-related hearing loss" may be caused by other health problems, such as diabetes or hypertension, or simply that as people get older they are more likely to experience certain genetic effects.

Please call us if you would like a copy of this newsletter to share with a family member or friend. Your help could be their first step toward better hearing and an improved quality of life. If you prefer not to receive our newsletter, please let us know.

Hearing Better or Hearing Easier? Hearing Can Be Hard Work

Hearing aids are truly wonderful devices. They make it possible for a child with hearing loss to develop normal speech and language and attend a regular classroom. Hearing aids help adults succeed at work and maintain active social lives. They even reduce the stress and frustration that hearing loss can cause at home.

These benefits occur because hearing aids enable you to hear *better*. What's less obvious is that hearing aids also allow the hearing aid user to hear with *less effort*.

For people with normal hearing, hearing and understanding occur almost automatically. Usually little effort is required. Of course, in challenging conditions, such as a noisy restaurant or in a large group, even people with normal hearing have to use energy and effort to understand.

A person with hearing loss needs to *concentrate* and pay greater *attention* to



Hearing and understanding in challenging conditions takes extra effort and energy.

hear and understand, even in easy listening situations. Concentrating and paying close attention means using more *energy* and *effort* to hear. This effort can make you mentally tired. A recent study found this effect in school-age children as well. Children with hearing loss report more fatigue, which can affect academic performance and social adjustment. And for both children and adults, the person is usually not even aware that extra effort is being used.

One of the less obvious benefits of using hearing aids is that they reduce listening effort. In fact, studies indicate that many hearing aid users don't use any more listening effort than those with normal hearing. Another study demonstrated that people who start using hearing aids simply "feel better." They may feel better because they are less tired.

The benefit of reduced listening effort can be seen in the sound booth. When asked to listen to and repeat words, the person without hearing aids leans forward, concentrates, and takes longer to "figure out" what the word might be. That same person using hearing aids relaxes, leans

Hearing aids reduce the effort needed to hear and understand.

back, and responds more quickly—and of course, more accurately.

Hearing better is the bottom line, of course, the real purpose of using hearing aids. But the added benefit that hearing aids can also reduce stress and lessen the effort and energy needed to participate in your hearing world comes in a close second.

Welcome

...to the Summer issue of our patient newsletter. We hope you find the information useful to you and your family and friends.

Our practice is based on three fundamental principles:

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

Diabetes and Hearing Loss

Diabetes is a disease characterized by elevated blood glucose levels. People with diabetes often develop hypertension, high cholesterol and other cardiovascular diseases. Diabetes is also the leading cause of blindness and kidney failure in the United States.

Diabetes is becoming more common and today affects about 10% of adults in the United States. About 40% of these cases are undiagnosed.

For many years the relationship between diabetes and hearing loss was unclear. In recent years, several large-scale studies have confirmed that diabetes is indeed a significant risk factor for hearing loss. Individuals with diabetes are 30% more likely to have hearing loss. This trend is more noticeable in younger adults. Also the severity of hearing loss may be related to the severity of diabetes.

Among adults with diabetes between the ages of 50 and 69 years, about 70% have high-frequency hearing loss. It also appears that persons with diabetes develop hearing loss at earlier ages.

Because diabetes is a significant risk factor for hearing loss, anyone with diabetes should be screened for hearing loss. Treating and controlling diabetes may also reduce the likelihood or severity of hearing loss.

Hearing Aids Improve Quality of Life

Although it's one of the most common problems in the over-50 age group, hearing loss often goes undetected and untreated. In fact, hearing loss is often present for several years before the person realizes it.

One couple recently had their hearing tested because each felt the other was having problems hearing. It turned out that each had a mild hearing loss. But the husband was more aware of his wife's hearing problems than his own—and the wife was more aware of her husband's problems than hers!

Research over the past 15 years has demonstrated:

- *Even mild hearing loss has significant effects*
- *The person with the loss is not the only one affected*
- *Hearing aids work*

Untreated hearing loss

Several studies have focused on the over-50 age group and concluded:

“Hearing loss is one of the most common chronic conditions and has important implications for quality of life. However, hearing loss is substantially underdetected and undertreated.”

In addition, adults with untreated hearing loss are:

- *less likely to participate in social activity*
- *more likely to report sadness and depression*
- *are at increased risk for developing dementia*

Benefits of treatment

Results of several studies indicate that hearing aid users feel greater satisfaction with

life. Research demonstrates that:

- *Hearing aid fittings result in “large quality of life improvements in communication and social functions.”*
- *Hearing aids are “very successful treatments for hearing impairment.”*
- *Persons who use hearing aids feel better about their overall health.*

A review of more than 1,500 studies found:

“There is strong evidence that the treatment of hearing loss improves quality of life.”

There is now a substantial body of research that demonstrates the negative effects of untreated hearing loss and the benefits of seeking help.



23-13 Broadway
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

PRSR STD
US Postage
PAID
Fairfield, NJ
Permit No. 131

SU11/4/1500

We Are Here To Help

At Ahrens Hearing Center we are constantly evolving to ensure we are providing the very best in hearing healthcare. Our commitment to maintaining the highest standards is something we take seriously (yes, hearing is very serious to us!)

Recently there has been a lot of misinformation circulating about insurance coverage for hearing aids, confusing even the most savvy of individuals (including us!). Unfortunately, coverage for proper hearing aids and associated professional services is still the same— few have actual coverage.

We want you to know that we can help in determining whether or not you have actual coverage for hearing devices and give you an honest assessment of any insurance coverage you may have. Please never hesitate to consult with us about any questions you have in achieving your best hearing possible.

Sincerely,

Cathi Ahrens Berke, BC-HIS, New Jersey License #455

Daniel C. Berke, BS-ME, New Jersey License #1239

Pat Meli-Cao and Helene Eickhorst

Ahrens Hearing Aid Center

Telephone: (201) 794-0120 • Visit us on the web at www.AhrensHearing.com