

Associated Hearing PROFESSIONALS

Diabetes and Hearing

In recognition of American Diabetes Month (November) and World Diabetes Day (November 14), the Better Hearing Institute (BHI) urged people with diabetes to get their hearing tested. According to the National Institutes of Health, people with diabetes have about twice the incidence of hearing loss compared to those without the disease. Routine care of patients with diabetes usually includes eye exams, however hearing health testing is often overlooked.

Numerous studies have shown the physical and emotional ramifications of untreated hearing loss. These consequences include withdrawal, isolation, de-

pression, impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks, increased risk to personal safety, reduced job performance and earning power, and diminished psychological and overall health. Researchers at Johns Hopkins and the National Institute on Aging found that seniors with hearing loss were more likely to develop dementia!

One researcher stated that the common hearing loss associated with aging is often accelerated in patients with diabetes, particularly when blood-glucose levels were not controlled. This study highlights the importance of patients controlling their diabetes and monitoring their hearing health.

We recommend baseline hearing testing for everyone, but in consid-

ering this research about the connection between diabetes and hearing loss, we suggest that diabetic patients ask their primary care physicians about including hearing healthcare in their regular monitoring and treatment plan.

Most patients with hearing loss, including those with diabetes, can benefit from hearing instruments, according to BHI. Research shows that for patients with mild to moderate hearing loss, the use of properly fitted hearing aids can help decrease depressive symptoms, anxiety and emotional instability, and provide significant improvements in quality of life and functional health status.



Hearing Loss May Increase Fall Risk– Who Knew?

A recent study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University and the National Institute on aging suggests that hearing loss could be a risk factor for falling. The investigators looked at over 2000 participants, aged 40-69. They found that people with a 25-decibel hearing loss (classified as mild) were three times more likely to have a history of falling. Every additional 10-decibel increase in hearing loss

increased the chances of falling 1.4 fold.

Even when researchers accounted for other factors linked with falling, including age, sex, race, cardiovascular disease, and vestibular (inner ear) function, the findings held true.

One possible explanation for the link is that people who can't hear well might not have good awareness of their overall environment, making tripping and

falling more likely. Another theory is "cognitive load". If hearing loss imposes a cognitive load, there may be fewer cognitive resources to help with maintaining balance and gait.

This study may help researchers develop new ways to prevent falls, especially in the elderly, and the resulting injuries that generate billions in health care costs in the United States.

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The Attack of the Boston Terrorist!



We love our pets, just as you love yours, but hearing devices are very expensive pet treats and toys!

Lately we have had several patients bring in their hearing aids which have been damaged or completely destroyed by their furry companions. One of our patients nicknamed her dog the “Boston Terrorist”.

Dogs, cats and other animals love hearing aids! Pets are attracted to the high pitched feedback sound hearing aids emit and the smell of your skin oils that linger on the aids. Dogs have been known to chew as well as swallow hearing aids. Cats like to play with the aids as if they were toys.

Sometimes the aids are able to be repaired, but often they are mangled beyond recognition. If the aids are under loss and damage coverage, they are replaced and the patient is charged a deductible fee of \$250 per device. If the hearing instruments are not under either the manufacturer’s loss and damage policy or an alternative insurance plan, the patient is then faced with the purchase of new devices.

In addition to the expense, time, and frustration, pet owners should remember that hearing aid batteries are toxic to animals, just as they are to people. When not in your ears, hearing aids should ALWAYS be placed in a drying jar or

hard case out of the reach of dogs, cats, and children for safe-keeping. Remember to do this when you are a guest in homes that have pets and children as well. Keeping your hearing instruments in a jar or case also insures that they are not mistakenly thrown out with the newspaper or tissues.

The only pet-proof hearing aids currently available are the extended wear Lyrics, which stay deep in your ear canals at all times; Lyrics are not appropriate for everyone. If you use daily wear hearing instruments, please remember to keep them away from your furry friends!



Nutrition and Hearing

Hearing loss is the third most common health problem in the United States, but few people are aware that changing their nutrition can help guard against it. Just in time for holiday indulging and subsequent resolutions, there is evidence that good nutrition can guard against hearing loss, according to a study in the Journal of Nutrition. Diets high in sugar and cholesterol can detrimentally impact hearing and contribute to the hearing loss normally associated with aging. Reducing sugar and cholesterol rich foods is part of a hearing fitness plan.

Furthermore, what you do take in is also very important. A study reported in the Journal of the American Academy of Audiology looked at the diets of 2000 people ages 49-99. The results found

that a diet high in antioxidants such as lycopene, vitamins C and E, and magnesium, shows a link with better hearing. This connection had been proven in animal studies, but this was the first research to show diet affecting human hearing.

Research reported on in the journal Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery indicated that deficiencies in folic acid and B12 harm the nervous and vascular systems, perhaps even damaging the coating over the cochlear nerve. Much of this damage is due to free radicals. Antioxidants like B12, folic acid, Omega 3, and vitamin A are all important because they fight damaging free radicals, which affect many parts of the body.

Recent studies in the Netherlands

and Australia show a link between consumption of Omega-3 fatty acids from fish and seafood and hearing loss in older adults. The theory is that Omega-3’s help reduce plaque and inflammation in the arteries, which can create poor blood supply to the ear, including the critical inner ear hair cells what help us hear. In the Australian study, those patients with the highest Omega-3 consumption were about 10% less likely to have hearing loss compared to those with lower consumption.



Best Wishes for a happy, healthy, fun, and safe holiday season from all of us at Associated Hearing Professionals! May you enjoy the sounds of the celebrations!

While we’re at it, best wishes to Ryan Farris, our fourth year doctoral student on his upcoming wedding December 22!