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Southern Vermont AUDIOLOGY
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DID YOU HEAR?

Is There a Link Between Hearing Loss and Cognitive Function?

A number of recent studies have revealed a link between hearing loss and dementia. A pair of Johns Hopkins studies found that hearing loss is associated with accelerated cognitive decline and dementia. Dr. Arthur Wingfield, professor of neuroscience at Brandeis University, has been studying the relationship between memory and hearing acuity. He says that unaddressed hearing loss not only affects the listener's ability to "hear" the sounds accurately, but it also affects higher-level cognitive function. Specifically, it interferes with the listener's ability to accurately process the auditory information and make sense of it.

Even a mild hearing loss that is left untreated can significantly increase cognitive load. When you have to use so much effort just to hear what is being said, you divert those cognitive resources away from storing what you heard into your memory.

The good news is that some experts believe that treatment of hearing loss, like hearing aids, could potentially delay or prevent this cognitive decline. It confirms the importance of treating hearing loss as soon as possible to protect our cognitive health and improve overall quality of life.

As we celebrate Southern Vermont Audiology's 5 year anniversary, I welcome you to the first edition of our ***Did You Hear?*** newsletter. Our goal is to provide you with interesting information about ear health, hearing loss, hearing protection, treatment of hearing loss, and technology updates.

I thank you for entrusting me with your hearing needs and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Katherine Lowkes, Au.D.
Board Certified Audiologist

Medications Linked to Hearing Loss

Ototoxicity is, quite simply, ear poisoning (oto = ear, toxicity = poisoning.) This can result from exposure to drugs or chemicals that damage the inner ear or the vestibulo-cochlear nerve (the nerve sending balance and hearing information from the inner ear to the brain). Ototoxicity can cause hearing loss, tinnitus, and/or balance problems. Ototoxicity can be temporary or permanent and can significantly impact a person's quality of life.

Many chemicals have ototoxic potential including over-the-counter drugs, prescription medications, and environmental chemicals. Some common ones include aminoglycoside antibiotics, loop diuretics, select chemotherapy medications, anesthetics, cardiac medications, glucocorticosteroids, mood altering drugs, and some vapors and solvents. **Do not stop taking medications prescribed by your physician just because you see them listed here!**

Speak with your physician about your concerns to determine the best choice in your own unique situation.

At present there are no treatments that can reverse ototoxicity damage, but there are treatments to rehabilitate. Individuals with hearing loss may be helped with hearing aids and/or cochlear implants. When a loss of balance function has occurred, physical therapy can help the brain become accustomed to the altered balance signals coming from the inner ear.

Anyone undergoing treatment with a known ototoxic medication should have a baseline hearing evaluation by an audiologist and then serial tests to monitor any change in their hearing.

Baby Boomers: tame that ringing in your ears and rock on!

Music helped define an entire generation of baby boomers. Unfortunately, that rock-n-roll music may still be ringing in your ears. Literally.

Tinnitus is the perception of sound in a person's ears or head that has no external source. People with tinnitus often describe the sound as a ringing, humming, buzzing, chirping, or even music or singing. Tinnitus is often a symptom of inner ear damage or hearing loss caused by noise exposure. Ear damage caused by noise exposure is typically cumulative and builds up over time.

Dangerously loud sounds can come from power tools, heavy equipment, guns, fireworks, motorcycles, vacuum cleaners, hair dryers, sirens and, yes, music. The good news is that there are treatments to help manage the tinnitus. Because hearing aids treat the underlying cause (hearing loss) of tinnitus, they often help relieve the tinnitus in addition to improving your hearing. Other treatment options include sound therapy devices that provide masking noise. Anyone suffering from tinnitus should have a diagnostic hearing evaluation by an audiologist for proper diagnosis and to determine if medical treatment is possible.

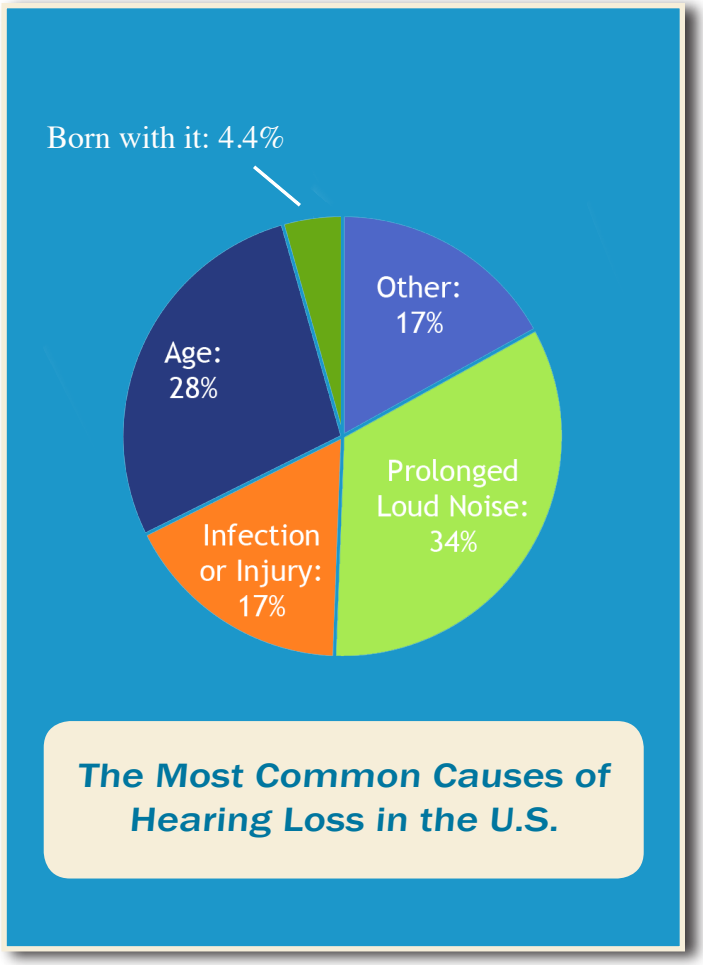
EXTEND YOUR Battery Life!

An 8th grade student from Minnesota won a US Naval Science Award for discovering that by waiting 5 minutes before putting a newly activated battery in your hearing aid, you may extend the battery life by two or three days. To activate a new battery, remove the sticker from the battery which allows oxygen to mix with zinc-oxide inside the battery. Wait 5 minutes before putting the activated battery in your hearing aid and save money!

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids: what you should know

You may have heard in the news recently that hearing aids will soon be available for sale over-the-counter (OTC). These products have actually been available for many years. You may have seen them advertised in the back of magazines, in infomercials, or on the internet. This new legislation will actually regulate these products to ensure consumer safety. Much like "reader" or "cheater" eyeglasses, OTC hearing aids will be an appropriate solution for someone with very mild hearing loss.

These devices will not be personalized for your specific hearing loss and will have limited output. OTC hearing aids will not replace the sophisticated technology, personalization, and professional care provided by an audiologist for someone with more significant hearing loss or communication needs. When hearing loss is suspected, a diagnostic hearing evaluation by an audiologist is always recommended for proper diagnosis and to determine if medical treatment is possible.



The Most Common Causes of Hearing Loss in the U.S.

Patient Corner

"A lot of great things have happened to me over the years, but arguably one of the BEST things was my friend telling me about Katherine Lowkes. The Oticon hearing aids are simply amazing and pretty much invisible. The trick is to wear them all the time; not just a couple hours a day. Initially, I didn't want to go down this road, but so glad I did."
- Bob S

Five Good Reasons to Treat Hearing Loss

~ The chorus of frogs on a summer evening.

~ The soft words of a close friend confiding in you.

~ The sweet melody of birds chirping.

~ So you stop forgetting to turn off your car's directional signal because you can't hear it.

~ So you never retreat from the people and things you love.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY, CALL 802 366-8020 OR VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.SVTAUDIOLOGY.COM

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