



DID YOU HEAR?

What Causes Earwax Buildup?

Although no one fully understands the purpose of earwax, experts believe it has some antibacterial properties and also helps move dead skin out of the ear canal. For most people, earwax works out of the ear canal on its own. “The ear is like a self-cleaning oven and you shouldn’t need to do anything to keep your ears clean of wax” states Dr. Eric Cohen, otolaryngologist at Lenox Hill Hospital.



As your mother taught you, *never* put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear canal. Cotton swabs are not necessary and can actually push the earwax deeper into your ear canal. Unfortunately, some ear canals do not self-clean well for reasons such as excessive earwax production, narrow ear canals and aging. Aging skin tends to produce less oil, making earwax dry and flaky, which can prevent it from working out on its own.

When earwax becomes impacted in the ear canal, you may apply oil (mineral oil, olive oil, baby oil or sweet oil) to your ear canal to help soften the earwax so that it can work its way out of your ear canal or be easily cleaned out by your medical provider. Over-the-counter earwax removal kits may be purchased without a prescription and often come with a syringe to rinse the ear canal. For those that wear hearing aids, applying the oil before bedtime allows it time to absorb and drain out of the canal before inserting the hearing aids in the morning. You should never apply oil or flush your ear canals if you have a hole in your eardrum or an active ear infection.



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The Link Between Diabetes and Hearing Loss

Hearing loss affects an estimated one of every five Americans and is **twice** as common for those living with diabetes. Researchers believe poor blood flow to the inner ear may be the main culprit. A study by the U.S. National Institutes of Health reported “it’s possible that the high blood glucose levels associated with diabetes cause damage to the tiny blood vessels in the inner ear, similar to the way in which diabetes can damage the eyes and the kidneys.” Diabetes-related hearing loss can affect one or both ears and may occur suddenly or gradually. Therefore, it is now recommended that routine hearing evaluations be included in the management of diabetes.

Other High Risk Factors of Hearing Loss:

- Heart Disease
- Thyroid Problems
- High Blood Pressure
- Multiple Sclerosis
- High Cholesterol
- Tinnitus



The Impact of Hearing Loss on Relationships

“It’s not all about you,” as they say. This can apply to many areas of life, but it is especially true if your hearing is not what it used to be. You might think your hearing loss only affects you, but consider this: **Is your hearing loss causing problems in your relationships?**

According to the Hearing Loss Association of America, more than 48 million people in the U.S. have some degree of hearing loss. The problem is only one out of four people who need them actually wear hearing aids, which leaves 75% of those with hearing loss putting their relationships at risk. A 2009 British study revealed that out of 1500 people with hearing loss surveyed, 44 percent reported that their hearing loss caused relationships with their family and friends to suffer. And 34 percent reported breakdown in communication had actually brought about loss of relationships, including marriages. “All too often spouses blame each other’s ability to listen when it is in fact a hearing problem,” said audiologist Patricia Chute, professor and chair of the Division of Health Professions at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY.

Day to day communication among couples, whether it be important matters or those that seem trivial, are the cornerstone of a healthy relationship. Hearing loss can cause those small but important interactions to be lost. When communication breaks down, frustration creeps in and that frustration can lead to resentment which leads to further breakdown in communication and intimacy. A sense of loneliness and isolation for both partners is usually the result of this breakdown.

Hearing loss can cause a cascade of detrimental effects and negative emotions between partners. But there is hope. Interventions such as hearing aids can not only improve quality of life, but can improve relationship satisfaction, communication and social functioning.



5 Tips for Easy Hearing Aid Care



1. Avoid moisture and store in dry place.

Hearing aids contain sophisticated electronics that can be damaged by moisture. If they accidentally come in contact with water, dry them immediately with a towel and let them sit for several hours with the battery door open. Storing them in a small dehumidifier is helpful, especially if you live in an area with high humidity. Dehumidifiers are available for purchase at Southern Vermont Audiology.

2. Change hearing aid batteries often.

Batteries can cause damage to your hearing aids if left in for too long. Trapped moisture can cause the batteries to corrode and damage the aid. Opening the battery door when the devices are not being used will also extend battery life.

3. Keep devices free of earwax.

Earwax is one of the leading causes of decreased performance in hearing aids. Unfortunately, it is impossible to avoid having your devices come in contact with earwax. That is why it is important to clean them frequently. This can be done by gently wiping away any earwax or debris that may be on the device.

4. If your hearing aid has a wax filter, replace as needed.

Along with keeping your hearing aid clean, you will periodically need to replace the wax filter. This filter prevents wax from reaching the internal components of the hearing aid. This should be done when you begin to see build-up on the filter.

5. We love our pets but keep them away from your hearing aids!

Difficulty Hearing on the Phone?



If you or someone you know has trouble hearing on the phone due to hearing loss, you may be eligible to receive a complimentary **CaptionCall** phone.

The revolutionary **CaptionCall** phone displays smooth-scrolling captions of what your callers say on a large, easy-to-read screen while providing the most powerful amplification available. It lets you **hear** and **read** your phone conversations so you won't miss a single word.

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Patient Corner



Rabbi-comedian, Bob Alper, won the Joke with the Pope Contest in 2015. The contest was launched by the Pontifical Mission Societies in the U.S. ahead of Pope Frances' visit. The contest netted 4,000 submissions from people, including actress and comedian Ellie Kemper, weather forecaster Al Roker, and late night TV host Conan O'Brien.

Bob's winning joke was "My wife and I have been married for over 46 years. Our lives are totally in sync. For example, the same time I got a hearing aid, she stopped mumbling."



- 1 in 5 Americans experience some degree of hearing loss.
- Hearing loss can affect people of all ages.
- By the age of 65, 1 out of 3 people has hearing loss.
- Hearing loss may be mistaken for aloofness, confusion, personality changes or dementia.
- Hearing loss is the 3rd most common chronic physical condition after arthritis and heart disease.
- Tinnitus (or ringing in the ears) can accompany hearing loss and may be as debilitating as hearing loss.
- Because we hear with our brains, untreated hearing loss may lead to cognitive decline and memory loss.

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