



Southern Vermont AUDIOLOGY

total hearing solutions

May is Better Hearing
and Speech Month!

The Role of Nutrition in Healthy Hearing and Successful Aging

In the United States, hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition after high blood pressure and arthritis. Fifty percent of adults age 75 and older report deficits in hearing (Goman & Lin, 2016). But is this deficit an inevitable part of aging or is it something that can be prevented? It is well known that the noise of our modern world can damage our hearing. Public awareness has grown in recent decades about the importance of protecting your ears from noise when engaged in noisy activities because once the damage has been done, it cannot be reversed. But is noise exposure the only lifestyle factor contributing to hearing loss?



Lifestyle factors (e.g., nutrition, physical activity, smoking, etc.) are widely recognized as a meaningful determinant of all major health complications, including hearing loss, and have a significant influence on aging. Lifestyle is modifiable, but sometimes difficult and complicated. In general, healthy living is a universal concept, but challenges can be unique depending on geographic region, sociocultural issues, and other factors (e.g., age, sex, etc.). Since the second half of the 20th century, society at a global level has changed how we eat—from largely plant-based diets with high micronutrient density to higher fat and more energy-dense diets. This is further affected by a shift to more sedentary activity levels. The cumulative effect is individuals who are overweight yet lack appropriate micronutrients. Poverty and access to nutritional foods is an overarching issue, but an additional element at play is health and nutritional literacy to increase acceptance of better health choices and behaviors.

Rowe and Kahn (1997) proposed a model of successful aging that included three main components: avoidance of disease and disability, maintenance of cognitive and physical function, and active engagement with life. Hearing loss is a condition that intersects, to some extent, with each of these three components. Therefore, if we can effectively manage or prevent hearing loss, we can reduce social isolation (avoidance of disease and disability), improve communication (engagement with life), and potentially influence cognitive function —thus leading to more successful aging.

DID YOU HEAR?

(Continued on page 2)

DO I REALLY NEED TO HAVE MY HEARING AIDS CHECKED ANNUALLY?

You only hear the best when your hearing devices are working well, your hearing test is up-to-date and when your ears themselves are clean. ***So, the answer is Yes!*** It is very important to schedule a professional cleaning at least once a year to optimize the functionality of your hearing aids and to extend the life of your devices.

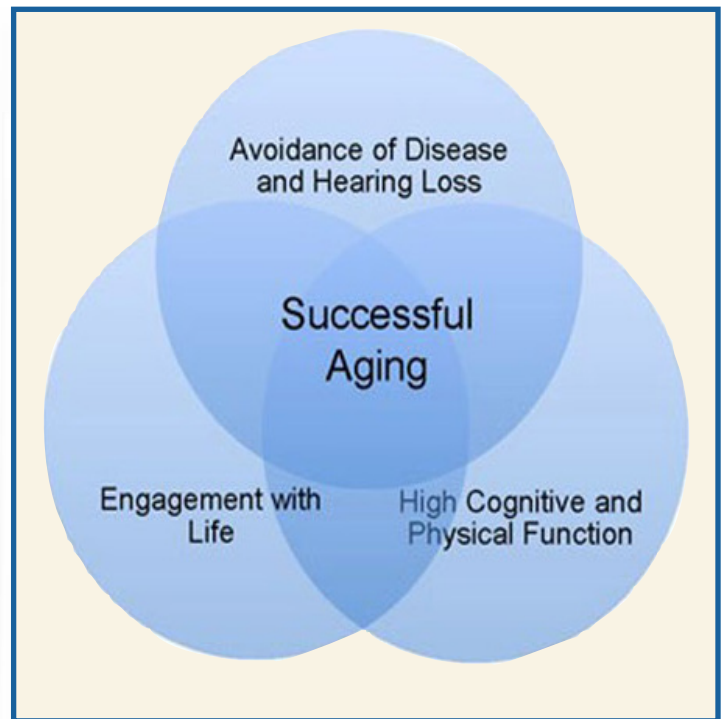
What is it that we do during this visit?

- Inspect ear canals and remove cerumen, as needed
- Repeat hearing test, as needed
- Do a physical inspection of the hearing device
- Thoroughly clean, disinfect and vacuum the hearing devices with specialized tools
- Complete computerized electroacoustic analysis, as needed
- Do a listening check of the hearing devices
- Clean earmolds and change tubing (when applicable)
- Perform hearing aid software update, as needed
- Change wax guards and domes

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Numerous studies have examined the relationship between lifestyle factors and hearing in both animals and humans. In general, these studies have demonstrated that diets inadequate in micronutrients, high in caloric intake, and high in dietary lipids increase the risk or odds of hearing loss. On the contrary, diets rich in micronutrients (in particular, those with antioxidant properties), low in caloric intake, low in dietary lipids (in particular, saturated fat), and low in sugar reduce the risk or odds of hearing loss. Physical activity, in particular, has been demonstrated as a significant risk reduction factor, with increased physical activity and decreased sedentary behavior associated with reduced odds of hearing loss (Loprinzi, 2013).

A good place to start for healthy eating recommendations is the USDA Dietary Guidelines. An eating plan that is well representative of the nutrient and dietary patterns shown to be associated with better hearing is the Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension—or the DASH diet. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and the USDA promote the DASH diet as an ideal eating plan for all Americans. The DASH eating plan is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and beans with limited or no intake of highly processed foods, sugar-sweetened foods and beverages, animal products including dairy, saturated fats, and sodium. The earlier we can incorporate health-promoting behaviors, the better.



In summary, successful hearing with age does not start with the ear but instead starts with health choices that influence our ability to successfully age. Hearing loss and other sensory functions can greatly influence aging and are, in turn, greatly influenced by our lifestyle and general health. We must remove from our mentality the assumption that hearing loss is an inevitable part of aging and, rather, view hearing loss as a disorder greatly influenced by lifestyle—much like the way we view disorders such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. (Adapted from article “The Role of Nutrition in Healthy Hearing by Christopher Spankovich at ASHA.org. March 2017)

Keeping Hearing Aids Safe From Pets

Keeping your hearing aids away from pets is important for two reasons: hearing aids are a significant investment in money and time, and hearing aid batteries are toxic to our furry friends.

Most hearing aids come with a protective case so you can keep them safe in your purse, pocket, or drawer until you need them. Rechargeable hearing aids come with a charging unit that are perfect for helping you keep track of your devices while also providing a full-day's charge.

Whether you have a pet or not, a storage case keeps your devices together in the same place protected from the elements. Even if your pet does get ahold of the storage case, the chance of them getting it open or damaging what's inside is much slimmer than if the devices are out in the open.



People without pets can keep their hearing aids anywhere that is cool, dry and safe, such as on the nightstand readily available for when they wake up. However, people with pets need to take extra precaution of where to place their devices, even if they are in a storage case.

It may seem like a bathroom counter or high windowsill would be a good place to keep your hearing aids but that is not the case. Humidity in the bathroom can cause damage and the heat from the direct sunlight on a windowsill can also damage the devices. Instead, you can opt to store your hearing aids in a nightstand drawer, jewelry box, or on a tall dresser/shelf to make sure your pets stay away from them.

If your pet does get ahold of your devices, there are some important steps to take. First, identify the level of damage of your devices. If they are simply damp from slobber or from getting knocked into a sink, wipe them off and place them in a dehumidifier. If there is visible damage, bring them to our office so we can inspect them. If your pet has eaten a battery or other part of a hearing aid, call your veterinarian immediately. They can give you guidance on how to proceed.



Summer is right
around the corner...

Just a reminder that our office will be closed on Fridays and open on Thursdays through the summer months starting the week of June 14th through the week of August 29th.



Patient Corner

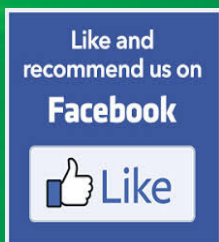


I am very lucky to have many friends. The more I lost my hearing, the more I stayed home. My doctor made an appointment for me with Dr. Lowkes. She was so wonderful and made me feel so comfortable. With my one hearing aid I am feeling so much better. Thank you Dr. Lowkes.

Judy W.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ears are always working. Your ears never stop hearing...even while you are asleep.
- Ears are part of our balance system.
- Ears have been useful to anthropologists for studying mankind's early migratory patterns.
- The average person is born with about 16,000 hair cells within their inner ear.
- The bones in our middle ear (malleus, incus and stapes) are the body's smallest bones. All three can fit together on the surface area of a penny.
- For the majority of people, ears self clean.



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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