

May is Better
Hearing & Speech
Month!

Southern Vermont AUDIOLOGY

total hearing solutions



DID YOU HEAR?

Why You Should Consistently Wear Your Hearing Aids

“I only wear my hearing aids when I go out” is one of the worst things you can do for yourself once you have made the decision to wear hearing aids.

The majority of our hearing is done in the brain and not with our ears. This is why it is so important to consistently expose the brain to sound through the use of hearing aids. The ears pick up sound and deliver it to the brain. When hearing loss is present, the brain is deprived of sound at a normal level. This then becomes one’s “normal hearing” but it is in fact not normal hearing. The brain must be consistently exposed to sounds at normal levels to put them into different categories as it once did. It’s retraining the brain to hear again at a normal level. Unfortunately, your hearing loss cannot be cured but hearing aids can significantly improve your hearing.



Some people with hearing loss believe they don’t need to wear their hearing aids while at home. They feel it’s not important to hear the furnace or air conditioner, footsteps on the floor or people moving around in the house, etc. But it is actually very important to hear these subtle sounds. As you hear more amplified sounds, you build a tolerance to the louder volume levels which helps them seem more natural or normal. Increased exposure will lead to optimal performance with hearing aids when you are in more challenging listening environments like a noisy restaurant. This is all done by the brain automatically without people even being aware it is happening.

Hearing loss is not only present when you go out into the noisy world. It may be more noticeable when you are in demanding listening environments but the loss is always there. If a hearing aid wearer only wears the hearing aids occasionally, the brain has no idea what to do with all this newly-introduced noise and stimuli. This can be overwhelming and cause people to then reject their hearing aids, stating “all I hear is noise”. If sound is experienced on a regular basis by wearing the hearing aids consistently, it will be more acceptable when background noise is introduced.

This whole process does not happen overnight. The more consistently you wear your hearing aids, the faster all sounds, both background and foreground, will become more natural. Be patient and give your brain a chance to adapt to all the wonderful new sounds of life!

**COVID-19
Update Inside**

Comorbidities of Hearing Loss



Balance Issues and Falls

At first the relationship between falling and hearing loss may seem strange, but balance issues are one of the most distinct comorbidities of hearing loss. While the inner ear contains tiny canals that help us calibrate our balance, the link between hearing issues is based primarily in the brain rather than the ear. When we can't hear properly, our mind expends more energy towards interpreting incoming sounds and speech and away from other tasks, such as balance and coordination. When our cognitive energy is diverted, it is more likely we will misjudge obstacles in our path and spatial situations, resulting in more falling injuries.

Diabetes

Diabetes is also linked to increased rates of hearing loss. Diabetes not only affects circulation in our feet and legs but also throughout the whole body. Restriction and poor circulation in the blood vessels that nourish the inner ear have the potential to cause permanent hearing loss. The tiny sensory cells in the inner ear (hair cells) detect the vibrations of sound waves entering the ear and send those signals to the brain. These hair cells are extremely susceptible to damage caused by poor circulation. Unfortunately, hair cells have no way of regenerating themselves so any damage results in permanent hearing loss.

Cardiovascular Disease

Much like diabetes, cardiovascular disease results in poor circulation which can harm the hair cells of the inner ear and result in permanent hearing loss. It is important to convey a diagnosis of hearing loss to your primary care provider because it may indicate unaddressed health issues such as cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

Kidney

Toxins that accumulate during kidney failure can damage nerves in the inner ear. Also, certain medications used to treat kidney ailments are ototoxic and can adversely affect hearing. Hearing loss can be so gradual it goes unnoticed, so if you have kidney disease, speak to your doctor about having a hearing test.

Depression and Isolation

Hearing loss often causes behavior changes because it limits how a person communicates. A person with hearing loss may begin avoiding activities they once enjoyed because their hearing loss now makes it more difficult to participate. This narrowing of social activity and communication can result in isolation. Feeling like you understand others and are understood by them is a key factor in maintaining mental health and warding off depression.

Cognitive Decline

Hearing loss can be associated with a faster rate of cognitive decline. 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. Also, parts of the brain that receive and process sound can shrink from lack of stimulation.

COVID-19 Update from Southern Vermont Audiology

There is no higher priority for Southern Vermont Audiology than the health and well being of our patients and staff. In accordance with Governor Scott's order, we will see patients for emergencies and essential visits only. We will not be seeing patients for routine visits at this time.

The office will be open on Tuesdays and Fridays with limited hours and by appointment only. If you are having an issue with your hearing aid, ear pain or sudden hearing loss, please call the office to schedule an appointment.

Coronavirus
COVID- 19



- ~ Our staff can always attempt to assist you over the phone with issues regarding hearing aid maintenance and cleaning.
- ~ If you are in need of supplies, please call the office and we can either mail them to you or make arrangements for pick up.
- ~ Although we normally love to see our patients, during this time please refrain from stopping by the office without calling first.
- ~ *Thank you and we hope you and your family stay healthy.*

Caption Call
now has an app for
iPhone!!

This app helps you
communicate better
wherever you are
with large text and an
easy-to-use
interface.

**Call our office for
more information.**



Patient Corner



Thanks to Dr. Lowkes and Oticon, I can now hear again! When I attended a talk by Doris Kearns Goodman and I did not hear one word, I knew I needed help. I have worn hearing aids for 40 years but over the past year they were less and less effective. I was considering resigning from a board I serve on because I couldn't hear and was frustrated.

I am thrilled that high-tech Oticon hearing aids have restored my hearing and my life!

Judy M.

The Secret to a Longer Life!!!

Everyone hopes to live a long, happy and healthy life but is there really a secret to it? In 2017, Susan Pinker, psychologist gave a TED Talk on this very issue. Many experts believe that the number one factor to a long life is social interaction. There are certainly other factors that play a role such as genetics and lifestyle choices but having a good social network and staying involved has been shown to be the number one indicator. In order to be involved, we have to be able to communicate and feel that we are included in conversations. People with hearing loss often feel left out and begin to withdraw from social events and activities. Regular hearing evaluations are important to detecting hearing loss early.

With May being National Hearing and Speech Month, take the time to visit your audiologist and encourage those around you to do so as well so you can all live a long, happy and healthy life!

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SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT
TODAY, CALL 802 366-8020 OR VISIT US
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