

The Southside Scene

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In the Livingston Health
Services Building

Welcome to our brand new newsletter! We hope you will find the information it contains to be helpful, and encourage you to pass it along to friends or family members who might also benefit from it. Please let us know what you think of our newsletter, and feel free to suggest topics for further newsletters – call Kathy at 243-7690 or let us know at your next visit!

What You Should Know About Hearing Loss

Hearing loss usually develops slowly, often worsens with age and is generally permanent. Most hearing difficulties can be helped by individually selected, prescribed and fitted hearing aids. It is important to first determine whether or not you might have a hearing impairment. Information provided here, especially in the Quick Test (see page 4), should be helpful in addressing this concern.



Why You May Be Unaware of the Problem

It is typical for individuals with a mild to moderate hearing loss to be unaware of their problem, even though family and friends are quite aware of it.

Hearing loss is invisible and almost always painless. There are no physical warning signs, except in some cases there may be ringing in the ear(s). But, the real reason hearing loss “sneaks” up on you is that the change is so gradual. Most hearing losses develop over a period of 25 to 30 years. By age 50 or 60, there can be enough deterioration to interfere with conversation.

Most audiologists believe that hearing loss in older adults is the accumulation of two or more

causes, such as exposure to loud noises and family history, or simply the natural aging process.

Hearing loss can interfere with the quality of life you’ve hoped for. It can restrict your ability to interact with others, prevent you from hearing important information, cause misunderstandings, heighten stress, cause unnecessary fatigue and filter out the subtle sounds of nature. Don’t let poor hearing make you miss out on the many good and vital messages of life.

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Special points of interest:

- Join our new Battery Club!
Those who will receive batteries as part of your hearing aid package will receive coupons for your remaining cartons at your next visit.
- Save the date! May 20 will be our Spring Consumer Seminar. Details in our next newsletter.
- Sue will be out of town from 1/31 until 2/10, and from 4/1 through 4/4. Office staff will be available part-time during those weeks to assist you, but we will be unable to see patients. We apologize for any inconvenience.

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Here, By Popular Demand....!

We are happy to announce that we will begin a Battery Club, effective the first of the year!

For those of you who are unfamiliar with battery clubs, it works like this: you prepay a fixed dollar amount for a certain number of battery packs. You receive coupons for those batteries, which you may redeem at any time during the year. Throughout the year, when you need more batter-

ies, you simply send in a coupon to us and we will mail your batteries to you! This saves you the time and inconvenience of a trip to our office, if the sole purpose of that visit is to obtain batteries.

If you would like to join our Battery Club, please contact Kathy, our Office Manager, at (585) 243-7690.

What is HIPAA?

You might not have heard of HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), but as a patient of any health care provider, you will see some changes in the very near future. Like what, you ask? Let's start with the primary focal points of HIPAA's privacy rules:

- **Notice**—patients will be informed of the types of personal information maintained and how it is used and disclosed
- **Choice**—patients must agree to uses and disclosures of personal information
- **Amendment**—patients are allowed to inspect personal information and correct errors
- **Disclosure Accounting**—patients have a right to know about disclosures or uses of the personal health information
- **Enforcement**—Complaints will be investigated and corrective action will be taken if personal health information is misused

So, you might wonder, what's the catch? Simply put, the answer is....*paperwork!* Patients must give specific authorization before health care providers may use or disclose protected information in most non-routine circumstances, such as releasing information to an employer or for use in marketing activities. Health care providers will need to provide patients with written notice of their privacy practices and patients' privacy rights. Patients will be asked to sign or otherwise acknowledge receipt of the privacy notice.

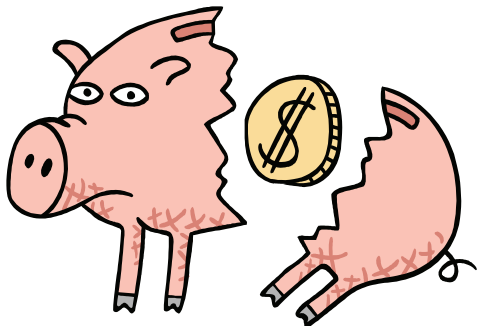
How does this relate to our relationship to you, as our patient? First, we will be developing our own **Notice of Privacy Practices**. We will provide ALL patients, new and existing, with a copy of this form upon their next visit with us. Each patient will be asked to sign a **Consent Form** that signifies the patient's agreement to our collection, use and disclosure of personal health information in accordance with our Notice of Privacy Practices. Patients may also be asked to sign an **Authorization Form** for Use of Personal Health Information, ie, should they choose to receive communications from our practice pertaining to upcoming events, or that may be construed as "marketing" information. A perfect example? This newsletter!

If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter (our goal is to make it a quarterly publication) beyond the HIPAA implementation date of April 14, 2003, we will need you to sign and return the enclosed Authorization Form to us before that date!

We are always happy to answer any questions you have. Please call us if you have questions, or go to <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2002pres/hipaa.html> for information from the Department of Health and Human Services.



"Patients must give specific authorization before health care providers may use or disclose protected information in most non-routine circumstances"



Sue Says.....

Why are hearing aids so darn expensive?

How can something so teeny-tiny cost so much? I have this discussion with many patients on a daily basis. First of all, I agree, they are expensive. But let's break down the ins and outs of why:

- With today's technology, we have computerization of almost everything, including hearing aids. This alone drives up the cost. But with other technologies, costs come down as competition grows and demand goes up. With hearing aids, competition is not as fierce, as the total number of companies is small compared to other industries. Let's face it- the demand for hearing aids is not as great as with other industries either. Studies show that the numbers of people with hearing loss that COULD be helped is very high, but the number of people actually wearing hearing aids is low.
- The next step is to actually miniaturize the technology, which is costly. Another aspect is the customization that occurs with every hearing aid. Remember, hearing aids are customized to personal needs. Two people with the same hearing loss will have different needs for the hearing aids.

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What You Should Know About Hearing Loss

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What You Should Know About Hearing Aids

Your doctor may recommend a complete hearing evaluation by a hearing professional, such as an audiologist. If the audiologist recommends a hearing aid for you, he or she will take into consideration your lifestyle and personal goals and guide you to the most suitable hearing aid.

Health Benefits From Hearing Aids

Hearing aid users report higher levels of involvement in social activities, fewer worries and more positive social and family experiences than those who have uncorrected hearing loss.

Who Can Be Helped?

Patients with “nerve deafness” and high-frequency hearing loss can benefit from the use of hearing aids in most cases. One is never too old to start using hearing aids. Today, over 95% of patients with hearing loss can successfully wear hearing aids.

Hearing Aid Styles

Hearing aids come in a wide range of sizes and styles, including completely in the canal (CIC), in the canal (ITC), in the ear (ITE) or behind the ear (BTE). The type of hearing aid recommended depends on your individual needs.

Hearing Aid Technology

Today’s technology provides significant advances over older conventional hearing aids. With the advent of modern computer software, we now

have a vast selection of programmable hearing aids using digital processing and directional microphones for better hearing in many listening situations.

Two Hearing Aids or One?

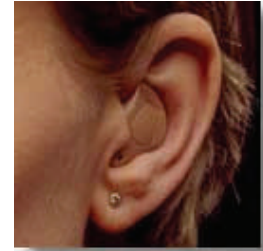
The need for one hearing aid or two should be determined by you and your audiologist. For most people with hearing loss, binaural amplification offers substantial improvement under both quiet and noisy conditions, along with a better sense of direction for locating the sound source.

Realistic Expectations

Understand the role of hearing aids. Just as eyeglasses do not “cure” vision deficiencies, hearing aids do not solve all hearing problems. But hearing aids can provide an important difference in your life and the lives of your family members.

Aural Rehabilitation

Audiologists provide additional services and procedures for lessening or compensating for hearing impairment. Various approaches involve auditory training, speech reading and helping to improve listening skills with assistive devices.



An example of an In-the-Ear (ITE) Hearing Aid

“Hearing loss can interfere with the quality of life you’ve hoped for.”

This article was obtained from the American Academy of Audiology’s website. For this article and others that may be of interest to you, visit their site at <http://www.audiology.org/consumer/guides>.

Additional Websites of Interest:

<http://www.sonus.com>
<http://www.audiology.org>
<http://www.audiologyonline.com>
<http://www.healthyhearing.com>

Sue Says....

(Continued from page 2)

- Next, hearing aids are coupled to the human biological system. This is an important demand that should not be taken lightly. There are NO technologies available that perfectly duplicate the function of the human body. When coupling an electronic device to the human body, you will always run into issues. The complexity of the human cochlea, the actual organ of hearing, is not completely understood yet. The research and development that goes into trying to understand cochlear dynamics so that we can replicate normal hearing using electronic devices is vast, but time consuming.
- Last, but certainly not least...the bundling concept. At my office and many others, the total dollar amount you are quoted is not just the cost of the hearing aid(s), but also includes the cost of the services, warranties, the cost of the equipment to provide the product, batteries, and the little things that add up that make your experience with the hearing aid a positive one. All of this should be viewed as a PACKAGE DEAL! Many times you will see ads for low dollar amounts. This, of course, is to catch your attention. I always say BUYER BEWARE with this. *Sometimes* they’re great deals...most times NOT.

I view myself as a healthcare provider, and hearing loss as a healthcare issue. Other places may view hearing aids as retail items with all the gimmicks and advertising that go along with it. This difference in philosophy is also one reason costs remain high. I encourage you, the consumer, to decide which philosophy is yours, and go with it!

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Hearing Health Quick Test

Answering YES to any of the following questions may mean that you have a hearing problem. Answering YES to several questions strongly suggests that a hearing check is necessary. In either case, you should have an audiologist check your hearing.

1. Do you experience ringing or noises in your ears?
2. Do you hear better with one ear than with the other?
3. Have any of your relatives (by birth) had a hearing loss?
4. Have you had any significant noise exposure at work, during recreation or in military service?
5. Do you find it difficult to follow a conversation in a noisy restaurant or crowded room?
6. Do you sometimes feel that people are mumbling or not speaking clearly?
7. Do you experience difficulty following dialogue in the theater?
8. Do you sometimes find it difficult to understand a speaker at a public meeting or a religious service?
9. Do you find yourself asking people to speak up or repeat themselves?
10. Do you find men's voices easier to understand than women's?
11. Do you experience difficulty understanding soft or whispered speech?
12. Do you sometimes have difficulty understanding speech on the telephone?
13. Does a hearing problem cause you to feel embarrassed when meeting new people?
14. Do you feel handicapped by a hearing problem?
15. Does a hearing problem cause you to visit friends, relatives, or neighbors less often than you would like?
16. Does a hearing problem cause you to talk to family members less often than you would like?
17. Does a hearing problem cause you to feel depressed?

This article was obtained from the American Academy of Audiologists' website, at <http://www.audiology.org>.