

Pacific Hearing Service News

Autumn 2011

496 First Street, Suite 120 Los Altos, CA 94022 (650) 941-0664
3555 Alameda de las Pulgas, Suite 100 Menlo Park, CA 94025 (650) 854-1980



Is hearing “well enough” ... good enough?

Recently, I had a patient come in to the office to discuss the possibility of new hearing devices. Her hearing test results indicated mild yet significant hearing loss. She described difficulty hearing family members and understanding conversations in church meetings. After telling me about her hearing problems and the frustrations they caused, she looked at me and said... “but I think I hear well enough.”

What is hearing “well enough”? Is it enough to hear only part of the exchange in a business meeting? Is it enough when you “tune out” after 10 minutes at a family gathering because it is just too hard to follow the conversation? How important is it to hear what your grandchild is saying? One could easily argue that “well enough” is not “good enough”!

There are many reasons people put off treatment of hearing loss. The cost of hearing devices, fear of looking “old” and concern that hearing aids will be “too much of a hassle” are excuses we hear every day. Let’s turn the tables and look more closely at the cost of putting it off.

First and foremost, untreated hearing loss is known to have serious social and emotional consequences. A survey in 1999 by the National Council on Aging looked at the impact of hearing loss in adults age 50 and older. (Age fifty is seeming younger and younger to me... but that’s a different article!) These hearing impaired adults who did not wear hearing devices were more likely to report sadness, depression, worry, anxiety and paranoia than their peers who wore hearing aids.

Recent studies have looked at the cognitive effects of hearing loss. A study at Brandeis University found that people with hearing loss are “having to work harder at what they are hearing, they’re not remembering as much, and, if they’re doing something

else at the same time...they’re doing more poorly on that.” They found that **even mild hearing loss** can affect memory and comprehension of what you hear.

The list goes on and on. Did you know older adults with hearing loss are more likely to report hypertension, heart disease and stroke? This information comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Also, one survey by the Better Hearing Institute showed that people with untreated hearing loss tend to make significantly less money than those who wear hearing aids.

There are many compelling reasons to give yourself the best hearing you can possibly get! We encourage our patients to make use of all the tools available to them for managing hearing loss. At Pacific Hearing Service, we don’t think “well enough” is “good enough.” If you have been putting it off, call to make an appointment today!

Source: *The Hearing Journal*, August, 2010

Welcome Dr. Lim!



After searching nationwide for months for an audiologist to join the PHS Menlo Park team, we are so lucky to have found an

outstanding audiologist who was doing her internship practically in our back yard. Dr. Shu-En Lim recently completed her clinical fellowship year at UCSF Department of Audiology where she worked with both pediatric and adult populations. At UCSF she gained extensive experience with hearing aids and cochlear implants. She also conducted balance and vestibular assessments at the UCSF Balance and Falls Center. Prior to that, she did her undergraduate work at Northwestern University and completed her doctorate in audiology at Vanderbilt University, the number one ranked audiology graduate program in the country! During her training at Vanderbilt, she served as a research assistant at the Dan Maddox Hearing Aid Research Laboratory where she helped with studies looking at patient performance with different hearing aid and hearing implant technologies. (We think she saw some famous country music stars while she was there, but she’s not telling!) She also assisted with research in an auditory system neuroanatomy lab studying the auditory cortex. She presented her research at the American Academy of Audiology meeting in 2010 and has presented in other forums as well. Shu-En is passionate about auditory rehabilitation and helping her patients and their families come to a better understanding of the impact of hearing loss.

We are thrilled that Shu-En has chosen to stay in the Bay Area and be a part of Pacific Hearing Service. Welcome Shu-En!

Visit our website at www.pacifichearing.com

Healthy Heart, Healthy Hearing

Did you know that if you have a healthy heart, you are more likely to have healthy hearing? The inner part of the ear is very sensitive to alterations in blood flow. Studies have shown that inadequate blood flow to the heart due to cardiovascular disease, can contribute to hearing loss. One study that was published in a journal for physicians called *The Laryngoscope*, indicated that low frequency (low pitch) hearing loss strongly correlates with cerebrovascular and peripheral

arterial disease. Hearing healthcare professionals have always recognized a correlation between hearing loss and heart health. We now have a better understanding of how these two seemingly separate body parts are connected. If you or someone you know has cardiovascular disease, a hearing test is in order. Call us today at (650) 941-0664 (Los Altos) or (650) 854-1980 (Menlo Park) to schedule your diagnostic hearing evaluation.

(Source: Better Hearing Institute: www.betterhearing.org)

So you think you know a lot about hearing loss and hearing aids?

Take our quiz below and see how much you know!

Questions

1. The average person with hearing loss waits about 7 years from the time they notice difficulty hearing before they do anything about it. **True/False**
2. "Hair cell damage" is the most common cause of hearing loss. These tiny hair cells can be seen by your doctor when he/she looks in your ears. **True/False**
3. Hearing aid technology hasn't changed much in the last 5 years. **True/False**
4. Ear wax makes a good bug repellent. **True/False**
5. Many elephant calls are too low in frequency for humans to hear. **True/False**

Answers

1. **TRUE** Why do people wait so long? Denial is a powerful thing! What people don't realize, however, is that while they are putting off hearing, the brain is slowly adjusting to NOT hearing. This auditory deprivation causes changes in the certain areas of the brain that may actually make understanding speech more difficult over time. The earlier you address hearing loss, the better it is for your brain!
2. **FALSE** "Hair cells" are not really hairs; they are just tiny cells in the inner part of the ear that are shaped like hairs. They are embedded deep in the inner part of the ear called the cochlea and cannot be seen by looking in the ear. When these cells are stimulated by sound, they activate the hearing nerve which then sends the sound to your brain.
3. **FALSE!** If you said true to this one, we think it's been too long since you've been to our office! Technology is changing at an amazing rate. Call us for an appointment and we will demonstrate some hearing devices that will truly impress.
4. **TRUE** Who knew???
5. **TRUE** Not that you really need to know this, but some elephant calls are around 15 Hz. The human ear can only detect sounds as low as 20 Hz. A single call at this low frequency can be heard by another elephant as much as 110 miles away!

Holiday Toy Shopping



Prior to purchasing a new toy, parents or others who buy toys for children should listen to the toy. If the toy sounds

loud, it should not be purchased. The danger with noisy toys is greater than the 90 dB-level implies. When held directly to the ear, as children often do, a noisy toy actually exposes the ear to as much as 120 dB of sound which is the equivalent of a jet plane taking off. Noise at this level is painful and can result in permanent hearing loss.

Toys that pose a noise danger include cap guns, talking dolls, vehicles with horns and sirens, walkie talkies, musical instruments, household toys like vacuum cleaners, and toys with cranks. Parents who have normal hearing need to inspect toys for noise danger just as they would for small pieces that can easily be swallowed.



Just for Laughs!

A woman who was hard of hearing visited her doctor. "I don't know exactly what's bothering me, but I'm feeling low and even my hearing seems to be getting worse." The doctor examines her eyes and finds nothing wrong. He looks in her throat and that's OK, too. Her right ear looks just fine. The he peers into her left ear. At this point, he removes his glasses, cleans them, and looks again. He takes a pair of forceps and removes something from her ear.

Shaking his head slowly, he says, "It's hard to believe, but this looks like a suppository."

"Oh!" the woman says, "Thank you! Now I know where I put my hearing aid."