

Pacific Hearing Service News

Autumn 2013

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What can I do about those noisy restaurants???

Trying to have a conversation in a noisy restaurant is one of the most difficult experiences for someone with hearing loss. In fact, it's the most common complaint we get from our patients! Hearing aid technology is getting better at pulling the speech out of background noise. But remember, some restaurants are so noisy that even people with normal hearing have difficulty! So what's a person with hearing loss supposed to do? We always recommend using every tool you have available to you for listening in noise. In addition to using the best hearing aid technology available, here are some other tips to maximize your benefit:

1. Plan ahead by picking a quieter restaurant. For example, unless you're content to read the captioning on the televisions, avoid sports bars. Try to find carpeted restaurants that have chairs with rollers on the legs (thus preventing an annoying scraping sound when they are moved), plants, and sound absorbent materials on the tables and walls.
2. Make reservations ahead of time, and ask for accommodations.
3. Go to your favorite restaurants, so you already know their specialties and options, such as choices of salad dressings or side dishes.



4. Pick the best day and time (not Friday nights!) to dine out.
5. Look on the restaurant's website to preview the menu.
6. Choose to dine with a smaller number of dining partners.
7. Pick a table in the least noisy part of the restaurant (e.g., away from the kitchen, bar, wait service stations, etc.).
8. Ask for seating in a well-lit area.
9. Remember that even people with normal hearing experience greater difficulty in a noisy listening environment than they do in a quiet listening environment. So, don't expect to do as well with your hearing aids in the noisy restaurant as you do in the quiet of your home.
10. Sit with your back to the window, so that lighting is on the speaker's face, not in your eyes.
11. Request that staff turn down background music (you are probably not the only patron bothered by the volume of the music).
12. Tell the host/hostess and waiter/waitress, as well as your dining companions, that you have a hearing loss and that it will help you if they slow down a bit, speak a little bit louder, and face you directly.
13. When possible, indicate choices before you're asked. Examples: "I'd like a salad with Italian dressing" or "I would like a burger, no fries."
14. Ask the waiter/waitress for a printed list of the specials of the day.
15. Use directional microphones and/or an FM system. If your hearing aids are set to directional, be sure to sit with your back to the main noise source.
16. Don't bluff!
17. If restaurant dining is for business, request another place to meet.
18. Relax/breathe and enjoy the fine food and the company, even if you don't catch every word.

Visit our website at www.pacifichearingservice.com

Spotlight on Mimi and Sandy! Our Excellent Audiology Assistants.

You may have noticed a change over the last couple of years in our front office staff. Mimi Gonzalez (Menlo Park) and Sandy Anderson (Los Altos) have been outstanding PHS employees for many years. Mimi, who came to PHS in 2004, started out as a bookkeeper. Sandy, here since 2002, started as a front office staff member performing services such as scheduling, confirming appointments, etc. Now they are wearing short white lab coats. Why? They have both undergone special training through Nova Southeastern University to become certified audiology assistants.



What does an audiology assistant do? They can help you with any number of questions you might have about using your hearing aids, from the correct way to insert the batteries to pairing and using them with your accessories. If you ever have any questions about how your hearing aids are working, please feel free to call or stop in.

Sandy and Mimi will happily demonstrate the CaptionCall telephones for you, and in Menlo Park, where we are an official demonstration site for the California Telephone Access Program (CTAP), Mimi can also demonstrate the specialized telephones that the state provides free for hearing-impaired people.

Behind the scenes, Sandy and Mimi are responsible for checking every new or repaired hearing aid to make

sure they are operating up to specifications and have the right programs installed before we give those hearing aids to you. This helps your audiologist

make the most of her appointment time with you.

No question is too small for Sandy and Mimi – they will even be happy to check your ears for excess wax buildup that needs to be removed.

Because we think they are great, we would like for you to know a little bit more about them.

Mimi Gonzalez loves to organize things. She keeps her audiologists in line! We love hearing her cheerful laugh ringing through the office. She and her husband, John, love cats. On occasion, they go on a motorcycle road trip to various destinations. When you see her, ask her how her tennis lessons are going!

Sandy Anderson is well-known for her super-friendly personality. Around the office she is also appreciated for bringing in delicious home-made treats. She and her husband, Jimmy, have two beautiful daughters, ages 5 and 7. Halloween is their absolute favorite holiday and they really go to extremes to make it a special celebration each year.

You've seen them around the office for years, but now you know a little more about them. If you haven't met Mimi or Sandy, ask to be introduced next time you drop by the office.

What Do Music Lovers Need to Know?

Hearing loss comes with a lot of emotional baggage. Struggling to follow a conversation leaves one feeling fatigued and frustrated. For music lovers, there is the additional sense of loss when music no longer sounds like it used to. Fortunately there are audiologists who are music lovers, too. And some have researched ways to enjoy music despite the hearing loss. Here are some useful tips!

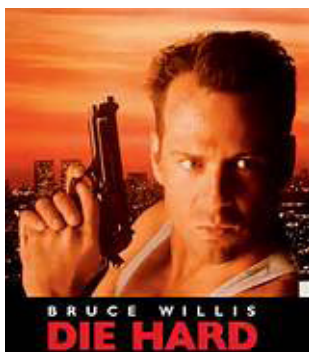


- When possible, go to concerts of music you are already familiar with. Your brain will help to “fill in the blanks.”
- If you aren't familiar with the music to be played, make an effort to familiarize yourself with it ahead of time.
- Live concerts may be more enjoyable than listening to music at home. Just like lipreading helps you to understand speech, seeing the music performed helps you to “hear” the music better.
- Some types of music are easier to hear than others. For example, because of the tonal quality, many people with hearing loss find cello music is particularly enjoyable.
- Keep it simple! Try listening to solo instruments, solo voices or small ensembles. Just like it's easier to hear one person talking in a room, it takes less effort to focus on music with fewer instruments or voices.

Die Hard Star Struggles with Hearing

When you see a “tough guy” like Die Hard star Bruce Willis, you think nothing could possibly go wrong with him. Right? Wrong. Mr. Willis has been criticized recently for appearing awkward during interviews. His daughter, Rumor, tells critics that the real problem is his hearing! During the filming of Die Hard several years ago, a gun was shot off next to his ear resulting in partial hearing loss. This means he is constantly struggling to hear the questions interviewers ask.

We know this is a common problem for people with hearing loss. Most people with impaired hearing hear some sounds but miss others. That means listening effort is increased as you try to piece together what is being said. Often people don't realize that others notice when they don't hear well. Since hearing loss is an “invisible handicap,” your



behavior can easily be interpreted as aloofness. Or worse! We know that properly fitted hearing aid technology can reduce listening effort making conversations easier.

Has the Die Hard star gotten hearing aids? We don't know the answer to that question. But we do know that properly fitted hearing aids would ease the awkwardness during those interviews! Hearing aids can clear up what you want to hear so people know you are as engaged in the conversation as you want to be!



An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He finally went to an audiologist who fitted him with high technology hearing aids which greatly improved his hearing. When the gentlemen went back to see his audiologist for a follow up visit she said, “Your hearing is so much better! Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again.”

He replied, “Oh, I haven't told my family yet. But I've changed my will three times!”

Earplugs for Musicians and Music Lovers!

If you play in a band or orchestra, you know you are at risk for music related hearing loss. Music lovers who enjoy going to concerts on a regular basis are also at risk. Music teachers, recording engineers and sound crews are in the same boat. But there is a problem with ordinary earplugs. They distort the music!

The problem with regular foam earplugs is they tend to reduce the high frequencies (treble sounds) more than the low frequencies (bass sounds.) This results in music sounding flat. Musician's plugs were developed by ETYMOTIC's president, Mead Killion, after he participated in a noise study for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.



They are the highest fidelity hearing protection plugs available.

Although there are non-custom musician's plugs available, the best fit and hearing protection occurs with customized plugs. An impression is made of your ear canals and sent to a special lab where the earplugs are made to fit only your ears. The button filter uses a special diaphragm

that results in flat attenuation. In other words, both the bass and treble sounds are reduced fairly equally resulting in much improved sound quality compared to other types of plugs. They are available with 9dB, 15db or 25dB sound reduction.

If you are interested in custom plugs, make an appointment with one of our audiologists to have ear impressions made. We *highly recommend them*. It takes approximately two weeks from the time of the impression to get them, so plan ahead! And since we are getting close to the holidays, we'd like to mention that the non-custom plugs make great gifts and don't require ear impressions. Just drop by!



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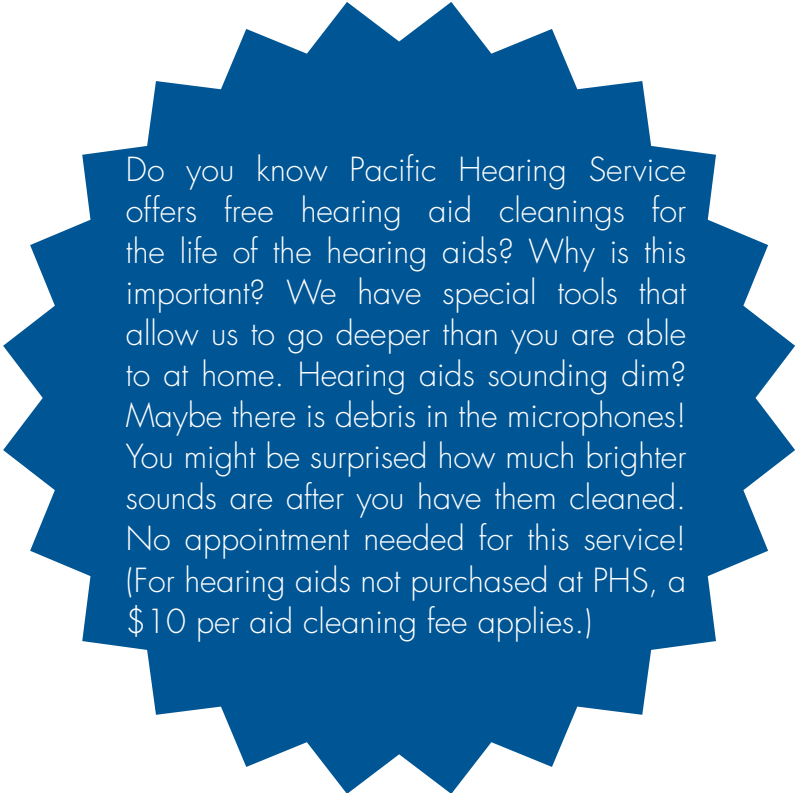
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Open your ears to new possibilities!

Helping others during the holidays

Pacific Hearing Service is sponsoring a Food Drive. Bring canned or dried foods to either office during the months of November and December. Donations will go to the Mountain View Food Bank (Los Altos Office) or St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room (Menlo Park). Next time you come in for an appointment or a complimentary cleaning is a great time to help us help others! Look for the food collection baskets in both offices. (Unopened canned and dried goods only, please. And if it's been sitting in your cabinet for awhile please check the expiration date before you drop it off. Thanks!)

Pacific Hearing Service is teaming up with the Stanford Blood Center for a blood drive and free hearing screening! Keep an eye out for future announcement about this event (to be held in both Menlo Park and Los Altos!) coming up on Dec. 16. If you are a patient here already, you probably don't need a hearing screening. But if you know someone who has been putting it off, this is a great opportunity. Give the gift of life AND the gift of hearing for the holidays. We promise cookies!

A large, dark blue starburst graphic with a jagged, multi-pointed border, containing white text.

Do you know Pacific Hearing Service offers free hearing aid cleanings for the life of the hearing aids? Why is this important? We have special tools that allow us to go deeper than you are able to at home. Hearing aids sounding dim? Maybe there is debris in the microphones! You might be surprised how much brighter sounds are after you have them cleaned. No appointment needed for this service! (For hearing aids not purchased at PHS, a \$10 per aid cleaning fee applies.)