

**SPRING
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The Hearing Report

The Newsletter of Audiology Services, Inc 617-484-8700

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SURVEY SAYS:

A survey by AARP and the American Speech Language Hearing Association of over two thousand AARP members showed:

- 68% noted some hearing problems
- Only 30 % of those noticing hearing loss had been treated
- 47% of those noticing loss didn't think it was bad enough to get hearing aids
- People sought help when the hearing loss interfered with their relationships with others

**“ I like to listen.
I have learned a
great deal from
listening carefully.
Most people never
listen ”**

Ernest Hemingway

GENETICS and HEARING LOSS

Congenital hearing loss is one of the most common birth defects- affecting 1 in 500 babies or 4,000 per year. It is estimated that 50-66% of those hearing losses are due to genetic factors. Of those genetically determined hearing losses, the majority (75-85%) have no other associated characteristics, while the remaining are part of a syndrome.

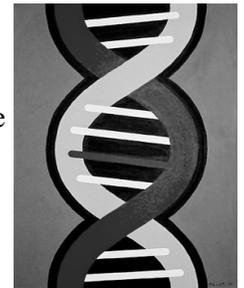
Genetic testing is becoming more common for infants identified with hearing loss. To date, over 80 genes have been implicated in causing some degree of hearing loss.

If the genetic cause is known, it may be possible to predict the progression of hearing loss for each decade and treat other problems that may be part of a syndrome. For example, a child with hearing loss due to Usher's syndrome, faces progressive vision loss as well as hearing loss. If the syndrome is known, the progression of vision loss can be slowed with the use of sunglasses.

The gene responsible for a protein called Connexin 26 may be the most common cause of congenital non-syndromic hearing loss. It accounts for 20% of all congenital hearing losses and is recessively inherited. Connexin proteins are needed in the inner ear for potassium flow to the hair cells.

While most of the current research is focused on infants and children, genetics is thought to play a role in acquired hearing loss as well. Hearing loss later in life tends to run in families.

Genetic hearing losses often present with a characteristic hearing loss pattern, so that it is possible for geneticists to predict the some of the genetic causes based on the hearing loss type and degree.



Tinnitus Treatment with Hearing Aids

The noise in the ears, known as tinnitus, can sound like ringing, buzzing, swishing, crickets, and can be constant or intermittent. Many people are able to tune it out and ignore it.

While there is no cure, the use of hearing aids has been shown to alleviate the annoyance in about 60% of people who have hearing loss and are distressed by tinnitus. For those who do not get relief with hearing aids or do not have hearing loss, we are now fitting hearing instruments equipped with programmable sound generators. Sounds can be created to help distract the brain from listening to the tinnitus, as well as providing amplification for hearing loss. These sounds can be presented constantly or for only specific periods through the day. This tinnitus treatment is best when accompanied by informational counseling.

We are all very happy to see spring arrive and look forward to a busy season.

Dr Rosowski attended the American Auditory Society meeting in Arizona, in March, where she attended many academic talks. There is currently much attention being paid to “listening effort”, which increases with both aging and the presence of hearing loss.

Dr Simonson will leave us in July when she moves to Chicago. We wish her all the best and thank her for her many years of service with us. Lauren Brum, our student intern for the past year, will join our staff full time. We congratulate her on receiving her clinical doctorate in Audiology in early May from Northeastern University.

As the AARP survey shows, people with hearing loss do not always seek help. In our experience, many people who delay hearing assistance, later comment that they wish they had acted sooner. Please share with your family and friends the benefits of treating hearing loss.

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