Dear Patients,

We hope you are doing well and looking forward to the warmer weather outside. At Hearing Professionals, we are constantly striving to better service our patients. One of the ways that we can provide you with new information is by sending a few of our audiologists to attend the American Academy of Audiology’s Conference, Audiology NOW!, in Phoenix this April. At this annual conference, our staff has the opportunity to learn about the most current research and breakthroughs in hearing healthcare through lectures and presentations by experts in the field of audiology. In addition, all of the manufacturers reveal their most cutting-edge hearing instrument technology which will be available this spring. We look forward to sharing all of the exciting new information with you.

In this newsletter, our column called Sound Advice features an article written by our audiologist, Dr. Megan Sowle. See Page 2 to read helpful tips about your hearing health and suggestions on how to address any concerns that you may have.

Don’t miss our article on Page 3 to learn about how hearing loss can affect your mental health. Taking a proactive approach to your hearing health could prevent unnecessary mental and emotional issues that are common with untreated hearing loss. If you like to stay active and are always on the go, refer to the article on Page 4 to learn about Caption Call Mobile and how you can stay connected to the ones you love.

ASHA, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, designates May as Better Hearing Month to raise awareness about communication disorders and the critical need for early treatment. This is the perfect time to get your hearing checked so that you can enjoy the beautiful sounds of spring and summer. Call us today 847-674-5585 to schedule your appointment.

At Hearing Professionals of Illinois, we are “hear” for you and we look forward to seeing you soon!

Warm Regards,

The Staff at Hearing Professionals of Illinois
If you said “Yes,” to two or more of the above, you are likely to have some degree of hearing loss. Do you realize how this impacts the people around you? For example, because you can’t hear yourself speak, your voice alters and becomes overly soft or monotone, which makes it difficult for your companions to hear what you say. Communication is a huge part of our everyday lives and it is hard to communicate effectively when you have a hearing loss. Family members tend to get frustrated and do not want to repeat themselves.

It’s likely you’ll lose the ability to hear high-frequency sounds first, such as women’s voices or children’s voices. If your partner is female, her speech may seem to come in and out of focus, depending on the syllables. For example, consonants carry much of the meaning of speech, and are concentrated in the higher pitch range, compared to vowels. Thus, for a word like “supper,” you may only catch the end “-per” part. This means you don’t fully understand what’s been said, which could lead to feeling isolated, or you constantly ask your partner to repeat what’s been said. The latter is tiring for both of you, and in the long term, can undermine your self-confidence. Unfortunately, a coping strategy all too often adopted by those suffering from hearing loss is to avoid the situations which challenge them the most. This might mean you are reluctant to eat at restaurants or go to the movies, which may diminish your quality of life.

If you are ready to take the next step in improving your hearing healthcare, you should consider making an appointment with one of our ENT physicians or our audiologists. Our physicians can examine your ears for any medical reasons causing hearing loss, such as excess wax or fluid. Our audiologists can pinpoint the exact nature of any hearing issues present and suggest viable solutions to improve your hearing. A typical test takes approximately 30 minutes and is not painful or invasive. You could even suggest your partner is tested as well. Our audiologists can pinpoint the exact nature of any hearing issues present and suggest viable solutions to improve your hearing.

The results of the study highlight the importance of early testing and treatment as a possible way to reduce the risk of the mental health issues and cognitive decline associated with hearing loss. In short, early screening and treatment can help improve quality of life, relationships, communication and social function, and help seniors re-engage in life.

How Hearing Loss Can Impact Mental Health

At Hearing Professionals of Illinois, we believe that better hearing = better living. New research shows that untreated hearing loss has a profound effect on mental state, affecting everything from temperament to perceived life satisfaction to cognition. With the youngest baby boomers now entering their fifties, the increasing population of those with hearing loss is becoming a significant issue. We recommend that everyone have a baseline hearing test by the time they turn 50 years old. Taking a proactive approach to your hearing health could prevent unnecessary mental and emotional issues that are common with untreated hearing loss.

DEPRESSION

In recent years, hearing loss has been linked with depression. As a matter of fact, a recent study by the National Council on Aging studied more than 2,300 people with hearing loss, and found that those with hearing loss were 50 percent more likely to experience depression. And it’s not just feeling down once in a while; many seniors with untreated hearing loss reported feelings of sadness and/or depression that lasted two weeks or more. “This study debunks the myth that untreated hearing loss in older persons is a harmless condition,” said James Firman, president and CEO of The National Council on Aging (NCOA). A study in the Journal of American Medicine Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery also supports the connection between hearing loss and an increased risk of depression.

COGNITIVE DECLINE

Cognitive decline is a significant problem that has been linked to untreated hearing loss in recent studies as well. Whether cognitive decline or even dementia is caused by hearing loss is not yet known; what is known is that a link has been established that needs further study. Researchers suspect that the higher risk for dementia and cognitive decline among those with untreated hearing loss could be caused by a number of factors. A recent study out of the University of Colorado suggests that one of these factors is brain reorganization, in which the hearing centers of the brain shrink and other parts of the brain previously devoted to other tasks end up taking over. The result is that brain functions such as short term memory or problem solving skills deteriorate.

Other studies, such as one done by Johns Hopkins in combination with the National Institute on Aging, suggest that for those with hearing loss the strain of decoding sounds may have something to do with dementia and cognitive decline. Simply put, straining to hear and understand sound becomes too much for the brain to handle, and again, the brain weakens as a result.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

Among seniors, loneliness and social isolation are common problems which are unfortunately only exacerbated by hearing loss. Many seniors become frustrated with their efforts to hear and understand, especially in noisy environments. As a result, they avoid activities, people and places they once enjoyed. The NCOA study found that people with untreated hearing loss are significantly less likely to participate in social activities than those who use hearing aids. While social isolation is a problem in and of itself, other research shows that it can be yet another factor in cognitive decline and dementia. If you think of the brain as a muscle, it is a “use it or lose it” situation in which diminished hearing leads to less brain stimulation.

The results of the studies highlight the importance of early testing and treatment as a possible way to reduce the risk of the mental health issues and cognitive decline associated with hearing loss. In short, early screening and treatment can help improve quality of life, relationships, communication and social function, and help seniors re-engage in life.

Want to help yourself or a loved one? We encourage you to come in for a hearing test as soon as possible. Our staff at Hearing Professionals of Illinois is here to provide comprehensive evaluations and lifestyle-specific technology recommendations to ensure a better hearing experience for as long as you are in our care. We look forward to the opportunity to help you take the first step to better hearing and better living!

Are you interested in trying NEW hearing instrument technology?

We are offering a FREE hearing instrument evaluation (a $75 value) with an in-office demonstration of hearing instruments programmed to your hearing loss. If you like how they sound, you can take them out for a 3 week RISK FREE trial to evaluate the benefit of the devices in your everyday environments. A current hearing test, billed to insurance, will be required at the time of the fitting. Call us today 847-674-5585 to schedule your appointment. This offer is good through April 30, 2016.