



HEARING HEALTH TODAY

NORTH CAROLINA AUDIOLOGY ASSOCIATES

A Patient Newsletter

October, 2013

Coping With Hearing Loss During Social Gatherings

With the holiday season upon us, we plan and anticipate time together with family and friends in great celebrations. Unfortunately, for hard of hearing listeners, the crowds and commotion can be frustrating and exhausting. People with hearing loss discussed how to enhance their enjoyment of holiday season gatherings during a meeting of the Saginaw Valley Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America.

Here are some tips for people with hearing loss to better communicate with hearing people.

- Tell people you have a hearing loss and let them know the best way to talk with you.
- Find the best listening areas in the room or building — perhaps in a corner or away from the noisiest areas. If necessary, ask someone to accompany you to a better listening area if you want to hear them better. Carpeting and low ceilings might be better than bare floors and high ceilings.
- Ask people to rephrase, not repeat. If you think you missed only part of a statement or question, ask something like “I missed the part after you said (insert whatever you last heard well). Would you please rephrase the rest?”
- Get plenty of rest before potentially difficult

events. Be patient, positive and relaxed .

- Remind your friends to speak slower, not louder.
- Have others get your attention before they speak to you. You will be ready to hear their first word.
- Don't bluff! Be honest if you're not understanding well.
- Even if you have told everyone before, others need to be reminded frequently about how to speak clearly. Old habits are hard to break.
- Take a break. Listening in social groups can be tiring. You will be using great amounts of energy through these times of fun and excitement. Short breaks of quiet time (5-10 minutes) can go a long way to keeping up your energy level.

Remember to have your hearing aids checked and cleaned before the holidays. Allow me to ensure that they are working their best for you as you enter into the social season. Be sure you have plenty of batteries and other supplies as well. Clean your hearing aids daily and store them in a dry aid container at night.

Have a blessed and happy Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanzaa, and New Year!

One Step Closer to a Cure for Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Scientists have found a potential cure for permanent deafness caused by loud noise exposure, infection and toxic drugs, using a drug that stimulates the inner ear. Until now, it has been regarded as impossible to restore the sensory hair cells responsible for hearing once they have been lost. Stem Cell therapies seemed promising, but have been met with biological road blocks. Noise-induced hearing loss, which affects our veterans, factory workers, musicians and many others was assumed to have been incurable.

However, a drug code named LY411575 brings about the regeneration of the crucial sensory hair cells and in tests was able to restore hearing to mice that had been deafened by loud noise.

This discovery, which was reported in the neuroscience journal *Neuron*, suggests that the

same may be possible in humans, although more research is still needed.

LY411575 works by suppressing proteins called Notch — our biological road block. Notch proteins prevent stem cells from becoming new sensory hair cells within the cochlea, the auditory area of the inner ear.

According to charity Deafness Research UK, an estimated 87 percent of deafness at all degrees of severity results from damage to the sensitive hair cells within the cochlea.

“We're excited by these results because they are a step forward in the biology of regeneration and prove that mammalian hair cells have the capacity to regenerate,” lead researcher Dr. Albert Edge of Harvard Medical School said.

Hearing Health and the Affordable Care Act

I have received many questions in the past several weeks about how the Affordable Care Act will effect Audiology services and hearing aids. I have read it, studied it, attended seminars, and I will tell you everything I know (it's not much!). Please remember, this law continues to evolve and change.

- **Medicare**— there is **no change**. Hearing tests are only covered when deemed "Medically Necessary" by your physician. Hearing aids are not covered.
- **Medicare Supplement**—Nearly all Medicare Supplements follow the same rules as Medicare. While a few offer small discounts for hearing aids, this varies by policy. Generally, you will see no change in your coverage for hearing services
- **Retirement/Pension Health benefits**—These will vary depending on the company from which you retired. Some of them offer coverage for hearing aids. Check with your benefit administrator.
- **Corporate Benefit Plans**—Depending on the policy your company chooses, hearing aids may be covered. Check with your benefits administrator for plan details.
- **If you buy your own insurance**—Chances are you will have coverage for medically necessary hearing examinations, but you will not have coverage for hearing aids. You may

be able to purchase this coverage. Consult with your insurance agent or administrator.

- **Children 21 and under**—In North Carolina, all children ages 21 and under are covered for hearing services and hearing aids **IF** they are insured by a North Carolina based company. This includes Medicaid, State Health Plan, and many private insurance plans. Some corporations may actually be self-insured, and therefore, are not required to provide this coverage.
- **Medicaid**—Medicaid only provides hearing care services when it is medically necessary. Hearing aid coverage is only available to children. This will not change.
- **Medical Device Tax**—Hearing aids are **EXEMPT** from the new Medical Device Tax. Also, the State of NC does not impose a sales tax on hearing aids or hearing aid batteries.

I hope this helps a little, at least for one small part of your health care needs. Generally speaking, you, the patient, will see no changes for hearing services under the new ACA. We will continue to be here for you and will always provide you the best experience in health care! Thank you for being a part of our practice!

Fondly,

Dr. Cynthia Schaffer and Lorna Preston



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Attention Springmoor Residents

Dr. Schaffer is in the Springmoor Clinic on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Wednesday of every month. Hearing screenings, hearing aid cleanings and small repairs are all **COMPLIMENTAARY**. Call the clinic for an appointment.



NORTH CAROLINA AUDIOLOGY ASSOCIATES

Cynthia Schaffer, Au.D.
Doctor of Audiology
Fellow, American Academy of Audiology

4002 Barrett Dr. #101
Raleigh, NC 27609

Phone: 919-783-8751

www.NCAudiology.com

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