Winter 2007
Volume 7

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Better hearing. Doesn't that sound good?

HEAR & NOW

Patriot Center for Hearing Loss Newsletter

HEARING LOSS

Are there different types of hearing loss?
When describing hearing loss we generally look at three attributes: 1) type of hearing loss, 2) degree of hearing loss, and 3) configuration of the hearing loss. Hearing loss can be categorized by where or what part of the auditory system is damaged. There are three basic types of hearing loss: 1) conductive hearing loss, 2) sensorineural hearing loss, and 3) mixed (combination of 1 & 2).

Conductive Hearing Loss occurs when sound is not conducted efficiently through the outer and middle ears. Absence or malformation of the outer ear (pinna), ear canal or middle ear bones (ossicles) can cause a conductive loss as can the presence of ear wax (cerumen) or fluid in the middle ear. Conductive hearing loss can often be corrected through medicine or surgery. Hearing aids may be prescribed if not medically corrected.

Sensorineural Hearing Loss occurs when there is damage to the inner ear (cochlea) or to the nerve pathways from the inner ear to the brain. You may have heard it referred to as "nerve deafness" or "nerve-type hearing loss". It is the most common type of hearing loss and not only involves a reduction in sound level, or ability to hear faint sounds, but also affects speech understanding or ability to hear clearly. It can be caused by diseases, birth injury, drugs that are toxic to the auditory system, and genetic syndromes. Sensorineural hearing loss may also occur as a result of noise exposure, viruses, head trauma, aging and tumors. Sensorineural hearing loss is permanent and cannot be corrected medically or surgically. Hearing aids are most often the recommended treatment and tend to work very well in this population.

Are there different degrees of hearing loss?
Degree of Loss refers to the severity of the hearing loss. There are seven categories that are typically used. The numerical values are based on the average of the hearing loss at three frequencies (500, 1000 and 2000 Hz). Most people do not have a flat degree of hearing loss but rather varying degrees of loss at different pitches, which is the configuration or shape of the hearing loss. For example, your hearing loss may be described as "mild sloping to moderately-severe" meaning the thresholds are better in the low frequencies than they are in the high frequencies. This is one reason people with hearing loss often say they can "hear" but cannot understand clearly. They are picking up volume in the low frequencies, which is where most vowel sounds are, but are unable to hear the high frequency consonant sounds.

Normal range or no impairment
= -10 dB to 15 dB
Slight Loss/Minimal loss
= 16 dB to 25 dB
Mild loss = 26 dB to 30 dB
Moderate loss = 31 dB to 50 dB
Moderate/Severe loss
= 51 dB to 70 dB
Severe loss = 71 dB to 90 dB
Profound loss = 91 dB or more

A thorough hearing evaluation by your audiologist will determine the type of hearing loss, the degree of loss and the configuration of hearing loss.

Other descriptors associated with hearing loss:

- **Bilateral vs unilateral**- Bilateral refers to hearing loss in both ears and unilateral means only one ear is affected.
- **Symmetrical vs asymmetrical**- Symmetrical hearing loss means that the degree and configuration of hearing loss are the same in both ears. Asymmetrical indicates the degree or configuration of hearing loss is different between ears.
- **Fluctuating vs stable hearing loss**- Some hearing losses come and go or change in degree of severity (such as with young children who have hearing loss as a result of fluid in the middle ear) whle other hearing losses remain the same, without change.
- **Progressive vs sudden hearing loss**- Progressive hearing loss becomes increasingly worse over time. A sudden hearing loss is one that has an acute or rapid onset and occurs quickly. A sudden drop in hearing should be medically and audiologically evaluated *immediately*! Time can play a key role in helping patients regain hearing.

If you have aidable hearing loss in both ears, consider why "Two Ears Are Better Than One"

sound localization - The ability to localize sound is dependent upon two equally functioning ears. When one ear is functioning better than the other, there is inadequate information to quickly and reliably determine the direction of a sound. How do we know the direction of a car's approach? The sound reaches the closer ear micro-seconds earlier and at a somewhat higher intensity than it reaches the opposite ear.

understanding of speech in noisy places or with multiple talkers - Unequal hearing in the left and right ears is commonly a very big disadvantage in noise. The most difficulty understanding speech occurs when a number of people are talking at once. This is usual during the interactions we enjoy, such as with family, friends and colleagues at work, when there is often other environmental noise as well. With two hearing instruments, it is possible to maximize understanding in noise.

hearing with less volume - A sound presented to both ears is judged to be louder than the same sound, at the same intensity, presented to one ear only. This means that a user of two hearing instruments can set the volume of each one lower, resulting in more pleasant hearing and less amplification of distracting background noises.

hearing equally from both sides - Wearing two hearing instruments gives the maximum opportunity to respond accurately and confidently, whether conversation comes from your left or right side. You don't have to worry about making sure your "good ear" is toward the speaker.

sound quality - Users of two hearing instruments report many additional benefits, such as more natural sound quality, a relaxation of listening effort and improved ability to hear correctly and respond appropriately.

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PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WISH TO HAVE YOUR NAME REMOVED FROM OUR NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST.

Happy Anniversary!

Tony and I celebrated our 14th wedding anniversary December 5th. God has richly blessed us with love, hope and faith. And if you'll bear with me through a bit of the mushy stuff, I just want to say "I love you, honey!"

Happy Birthday Joey!

Joey (my nephew, Gerri's grandson and Denise's son) turned 6 years old on Jan 11. He is growing up sooo fast! We happen to think he is the cutest, most smartest, bestest kid evah!

A Star is Born!

Look for our commercial now showing on Charter cable channels (currently on The Weather Channel, CNN, TV Land & History Channel). The one playing through February stars my mom, Gerri, and my husband, Tony, as a patient and family member. The next one will feature my father-in-law, Earl, and his wife, Pat. It is fitting for our family to represent our patients as we feel our patients are just like family!