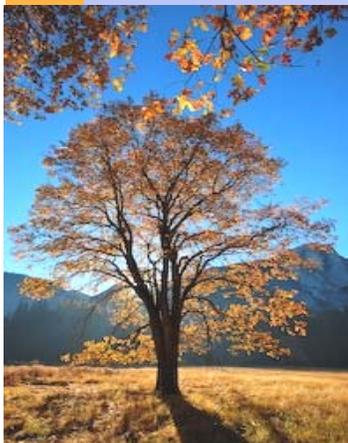


Winter 2009



Courtesy of Physicians Hearing Services

Sound Advice



Truth about Hearing Loss & Hearing Devices

Over 30 million adult Americans report some degree of hearing loss and, of this number, the majority are under the age of 75. Additionally, only 1 out of 5 who can benefit from hearing devices actually use them. So what is stopping the remaining 80% of these individuals with hearing impairment from obtaining or using hearing devices?

In some cases, the answer is simple. The person with the hearing loss has not accepted it and feels he or she is not ready for “that next step”. Many individuals become adept at creating compensatory habits such as asking for repetitions, rephrasing, repeating what they thought they heard to verify its correctness, and watching facial clues and gestures (speechreading). While these are good skills that can be very beneficial for understanding, they do not solve the issue of hearing loss and hearing difficulties completely. They are still missing the essential component: access to sounds they are missing.

Men are more likely to have hearing loss, but are less likely to take action to manage it appropriately. This may lead to a dependency on the spouse as interpreter for phone calls, repeating information that was missed, etc. When the spouse is willing to act as the ears of the hearing

impaired person, a co-dependent relationship may put a strain on both parties. It also reduces *hearing independence* which can further lead to social isolation. As hearing healthcare professionals, we would like to help people avoid this situation.

As we get older, our bodies naturally wear out a bit, some more than others. Even for those who are in shape, there are still those little things that we can no longer do the way we used to. Hearing loss can be managed with appropriate counseling,



effective use of communication strategies, properly fit amplification devices, and in some cases assistive listening devices may be beneficial.

We see many advertisements to get out and get active, do

something about our physical fitness, overall health, mental agility, etc. Why not be active in your hearing health as well?

If you suffer from hearing loss, you are not alone in your quiet world. Step out and reconnect to the world of sound. If you have been putting off talking to an audiologist, call now for a free consultation. All you need to get started is a recent hearing evaluation (diagnostic audiological evaluation), less than a year old.

Statistics obtained from National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, Aug., 2008

Inside this issue:

Debunking the Myths Surrounding Hearing Loss &	2
Speechreading Tips (formally known as Lipreading)	2
Hearing Aids: A Brief Review of Technology	3
LACE Review	3
Step Out	4

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Debunking the Myths Surrounding Hearing Loss & Hearing Devices

There are many misconceptions regarding hearing loss. Listed below are some of them, and the truth revealed.

Hearing aids will make me look old or handicapped.

Hearing devices can actually have the reverse effect. Often people will make a judgment about age based on how you conduct yourself. If you feign understanding when you cannot hear, it may appear that you are just not comprehending what is being said (unrelated to hearing loss). Additionally, in today's high-tech society, wearing devices on the head is no longer reserved for hearing aids and glasses. How many people walk around with those "torpedo looking" Bluetooth devices?

Only people with serious hearing loss need hearing aids.



This is not accurate and depends on a person's listening requirements. An example would be a psychiatrist who needs to

hear the delicate nuances of speech where *even a mild hearing loss may need to be managed with amplification.*

Hearing loss affects only old people and is a sign of aging.

There is a partial truth in this statement. There is a correlation between age and hearing loss; however, only 35% (12.25 million) are over the age of 64. There are approximately 6 million young adults with identified hearing loss and over 1 million school age children with hearing loss. Hearing loss is clearly *not restricted to the elderly.*

My hearing loss cannot be helped. Unfortunately there are many physicians who are unaware of the significant advancements in the realm of amplification systems. Most family doctors do not have the specialized training and understanding of hearing loss and may believe that there is nothing to be done. Years ago this was true with certain types of hearing loss, however, with more accurate understanding of how the structures inside the inner ear work and technological advances, the majority of people with hearing loss **can benefit** from hearing devices.

Speechreading Tips (also known as Lipreading)

The term "lipreading" has been replaced by "speechreading" to include all the other facial cues, body language, intonation, the rhythm of speech and word stress. Speechreading is very helpful regardless of the degree of hearing loss. Most people will use it to varying degrees even without realizing it. A good example is what happens when watching a foreign film dubbed in English. You know the words you see are not the ones you are hearing. Here are some things to keep in mind to improve your natural skills.

Visibility is one of the most important considerations when trying to communicate. If you cannot see the person you are talking to, it can affect how well you understand the conversation. This includes the person who talks with their hand at their mouth and the gentleman with facial hair.

Good lighting and a clear view of your communication partners' face will help. Visual cues from the lips, facial expression, and body can make the difference between understanding or misunderstanding.

Distance from the sound source is another issue. The

farther away from the speaker, the harder to see AND hear them.

Reduce the distance to make the communication more meaningful.

Restricted mouth movements will also interfere with the visual cues you receive. The ventriloquist in training, the pencil chewer, and the person with the perpetual smile are difficult to understand because of the lack of movement in their lips.

Being assertive in such instances may help. Request the person speak more deliberately, using their lips. Changing human behavior is a difficult task and patient reminders are often needed.



Hearing Aids: A Brief Review of Technology

Believe it or not, hearing aids have been around for more than 100 years. The following is a brief discussion regarding some of the differences between the devices of yesterday and those of today.

Technology has moved a long way from vacuum tube and carbon circuits to the microchip. Once the electronics were small enough to fit in ear-level devices, the race to improve them took off. Analog devices, or conventional hearing aids, were very simple in design, but functional. They had a microphone, an amplifier, and a speaker. Sometimes they would have a series of filters that could put more emphasis on bass or treble, or limit the amount of output, sometimes through the use of a volume control. The failing of these devices was their inability to distinguish the different characteristics of sounds,



such as speech versus noise.

While today's circuitry incorporates the same basic components as the conventional devices, they are far from being simplistic. Directional microphones are better able to monitor the types of sounds in the listening environment. These sounds are then sent to a computer chip, or processor, that analyzes and simultaneously processes the information based on the individualized programming set by your audiologist. Finally, the output has been enhanced with the higher fidelity speakers (called receivers).

All these advances are attempts to improve the sound quality of the device and its effectiveness in noise. While the majority of devices today are digital, not all digital instruments are created equal. When your audiologist recommends updating your devices, it is to provide you with improved access to sound.



LACE Review

In our last issue we introduced LACE as an exciting way to provide our patients with an effective aural rehabilitation program to use in conjunction with their hearing aids.

LACE has become an integral part of our desire to provide more rounded and effective care to our patients.

LACE, Listening and Communication Enhancement, is an interactive computerized training program, designed by Dr. Robert Sweetow and colleagues at UCSF. This home-based program was created to improve listening and comprehension skills through various types of auditory tasks. The program adapts to your unique learning curve which helps maximize learning while minimizing frustration and boredom.

The four (4) week program only takes twenty (20) minutes a day, five (5) days a week. LACE provides a variety of interactive and adaptive tasks that are divided into three main categories: degraded speech (e.g. fast speech), cognitive skills (e.g. directed listening) and communication strategies. The difficulty level of each task is based on the responses given; the more accurate the response the more difficult the next task will be, likewise inaccurate responses will result in a less difficult task.

A number of patients have successfully completed the LACE program. We would like to share some of their reactions with you.

“I was amazed at how much the exercises carried over to my everyday listening situations.”

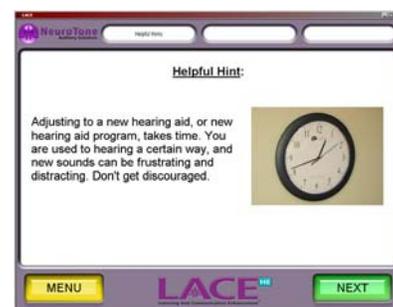
“A few people I work with have always been difficult to understand, but after completing LACE, I don't seem to have that problem anymore.”

“The topics provided helped keep me interested and motivated to complete the program.”

“I find it much easier to ‘tune-out’ what I don't want to hear and focus on the person I'm listening to.”

“I no longer find myself constantly asking for repetitions. Now I know what to do and have better listening habits.”

If you are looking to enhance/improve your outcomes with your current or new hearing aids, consider LACE. Ask your audiologist to get you started.



Throughout the Training, LACE Provides Helpful Hints & Communication Strategies

Step out into a whole new world with Dual.

Hearing issues shouldn't drive you into isolation, becoming disengaged from family and friends and the world around you. Dual is a new breakthrough hearing device that helps you reconnect by allowing you to hear better in virtually any situation. Move from a world of loneliness and isolation to one of clear, natural hearing...putting you back in touch with family, friends and a more rewarding lifestyle.



- ◆ The ultimate combination of state-of-the-art technology with a sleek design you want to wear
- ◆ Understand what others are saying in noisy situations
- ◆ Use the telephone with ease and convenience
- ◆ Watch TV at the same volume as everyone else

At Physicians Hearing Services, we believe that our job isn't finished until our patients' lives are improved. Physicians Hearing Services staff of professionals has a combined 64 years of experience in bringing the best possible hearing care to the San Joaquin Valley area. We will work with you to find the hearing solution that best fits your individual needs and budget. Call us today, (559)432-5973 and you will see that visiting Physicians Hearing Services is the best way to take the first step toward improved hearing.



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