

ADULTS WITH HEARING LOSS

The incidence of hearing loss in the United States is rising drastically

The ear is a complex system of moving parts prone to infection, damaged by loud noise and weakened by age. **More than 28 million Americans have some degree of hearing loss** from mild to severe. The number may reach an **astonishing 78 million by 2030** (baby boomer phenomenon). The oral hearing loss community (**hard-of-hearing, late-deafened and oral deaf**) **comprises 95% of the people with hearing loss.**

Tinnitus is a perception of sound (buzzing/ringing in the ears) in the absence of real external sound. It **often accompanies hearing loss** and is related to inner ear hair cell damage. The intensity can vary from mild to overwhelming and the sound can be intermittent or continuous, musical or irritating, pure tone or a cacophony of noise. An estimated 20-35% of the population (**50 million people**) **are affected at some time in their lives.** These figures will likely rise as increased noise exposure causes hair cell damage for more Americans.

Hearing loss is the **3rd most commonly diagnosed veterans' service-related ailment**, according to Department of Veterans Affairs. **Soldiers sent to battle zones are 50 times more likely to suffer noise-induced hearing loss** than soldiers who do not deploy. In Iraq, there has been an inadequate supply of earplugs and failure to supply unit commanders with information about adequate hearing protection and pre-deployment hearing status. Currently only one audiologist is deployed in Iraq at any given time.

WE MUST PROTECT OURSELVES FROM NOISE DAMAGE AT EVERY AGE AND STAGE

Three questions to consider about noise: How loud?...How long?...How close?

Risk Formula = Intensity of sound (decibel or dB)
x duration or time of exposure

5-Decibel Rule = For each 5 dB increase, permissible time of noise exposure is cut in half

How loud is too loud?

Prolonged exposure to **noise above 85 dB** can cause gradual hearing loss.
Exposure to **sound levels above 116 dB** is unsafe for any period of time.

Conversational speech=60dB
Motor-cycle=95dB
Firecracker=150dB

Power mower=90dB

Ambulance siren=120dB

Personal stereo at max. level=105dB!

Rock Concert/Chainsaw=110dB

Woodshop/Snowmobile=100dB

CARRY AND USE EARPLUGS OR OTHER EAR PROTECTION FOR LOUD ACTIVITIES

TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE of *technology*

Assistive listening systems (ALS) use wireless technology (FM, infrared or induction loop) to help you better understand TV and reduce your listening effort. A personal loudspeaker or headset system may be used. An ALS is a personal choice to investigate under the guidance of an audiologist or hearing aid dispenser.

Many TV programs, especially PBS, have **closed captioning (text dialog under picture)**. This feature can be enabled for most new TV sets with the cc remote control button.

Captioned telephone services (CapTel) provide printouts of phone conversations on your phone screen. California is currently conducting a CapTel expanded technology trial that **offers full CapTel services. To receive a FREE CapTel phone, contact: CTAP** at (800) 806-1191 (Voice) (800) 806-4474 (TTY) or www.captionedtelephone.com

National wireless (cell) phone carriers are currently required to offer 4 **hearing-aid-compatible (HAC) phones** in their stores and will add a 5th phone by 2007. **Telecoil-compatible handsets** will be offered in Sept., 2006.

CTIA-The Wireless Association has a **website that is devoted to listing accessible telecommunications products** for people with hearing (and other) disabilities: www.accesswireless.org.

Devices such as Silent Call Lamplighter give **instant notification (via different flash patterns) of everyday household sounds** such as doorbell, phone, sound monitor and smoke detector. Contact (800) 572-5227 (Voice or TTY) or www.silentcall.com.

Portable devices such as the Treo and Blackberry are popular with persons with hearing loss because of their complex text and e-mail capabilities.

TAKE CONTROL of your communication environment

Be straightforward. Let friends and acquaintances know you have a (mild-moderate-severe) hearing loss. They will be much more comfortable when you acknowledge the condition directly, e.g., *I have a moderate hearing loss. My hearing aids help tremendously but don't totally correct the problem.*

Let your conversation partners know that when they need to clarify for you:

- **Re-phrasing** is more effective than simply repeating verbatim
- **Natural speech** without exaggerated mouth postures works best
- **Normal conversational speech** is better than talking louder

Sit in front of a window or lamp with the **light facing out from you onto the face of the speaker** to make speech reading less effortful and reduce any glare.

Reduce ambient noise in social situations. This means turning OFF any “mood music”, TV programs, noisy fans or household appliances when having group conversations.

Reduce the noise level in your car by keeping windows closed, the radio/CD player off and heating/air conditioning fan on the lowest setting.

Request a booth (rather than table) **and a corner location** (rather than middle of the room) **in a restaurant.** When you make the reservation, tell the maitre'd that you are requesting the accommodation because you are hearing impaired to ensure that the restaurant honors your request.

Don't try to FAKE IT! When you miss part of a spoken message, immediately

- Raise and extend your hand toward the speaker to nonverbally “stop” him/her and
- Repeat what you DID hear with a WH question for the missed information, e.g., *You got a message regarding-WHO? He met with you but can't help-WHY? The application isn't complete until-WHAT?*

TAKE TIME to educate-and advocate for-yourself and others

Speech reading (lip reading) classes are available through Palo Alto Senior Day Health Program and Little House in Menlo Park. Foothill College offers 3 lip reading classes (beginning-advanced), FM listening systems, signing tutors and note takers through their Disability Resource Center. Other community colleges and adult education programs offer lip reading and hearing aid use classes/workshops; consult their catalogs.

Contact your ear-nose-throat specialist, your audiologist or a local medical center with a large ENT clinic, e.g., Stanford or UCSF. Make them aware of your hearing status and ask to be on their mailing/e-mail list. Let them know you'd like to: **a) attend lectures or support groups, b) talk with other hearing impaired patients with a similar loss, c) participate in ongoing research studies.**

Ask your audiologist or hearing aid dispenser for names and contact information for **local support groups for deaf and hard-of-hearing adults.** These groups serve many useful functions, including the opportunity to practice speech and speech reading with accepting, understanding communication partners.

Ask your audiologist or dispenser to inform you about **pending legislation/regulation regarding hearing aids, assistive devices and insurance issues** that may impact you. Call or email your state or federal representatives -- and engage your friends and family to do the same-if a bill or amendment is in process. Call your local paper and offer to be interviewed regarding how passage (or non-passage) of a bill would effect your life.

The **Hearing Loss Association of America (HLLA)** (formerly SHHH: Self-Help for the Hard of Hearing) has 12 state organizations and several local chapters.

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Esther Snively-San Jose

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HLLA provides education, support and advocacy and publishes **Hearing Loss Magazine** bimonthly. It is included free with HLLA membership (\$25) or \$5.25/issue for non-members. Contact: www.hearingloss.org

Alexander Graham Bell Assoc. for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AGBell), headquartered in Washington, D.C., advocates independence through listening and talking and are active in promoting oral education for deaf children. The local AGBell contact is at Peninsula Oral School for the Deaf in Redwood City: mleen@jwposd.org

Deaf Counseling, Advocacy and Referral Agency (DCARA), headquartered in San Leandro, serves the Bay area Deaf community. Services include sign language classes for hard-of-hearing and late-deafened adults, interpreting services and an extensive book store. 877-DCARA99 (Voice); 877-DCARA88 (TTY); www.dcara.org

The **National Association of the Deaf (NAD)**, headquartered in Silver Spring, MD., has long provided support, education and advocacy for the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. NAD is especially effective in lobbying Congress and supporting legislation regarding disability law, access and technology for the hearing impaired. (301) 587-1788 (Voice) or 1789 (TTY) www.nad.org

National Institutes of Health have extensive information available regarding noise-induced hearing loss (**WISE EARS nationwide campaign**) at: www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/wise/tips

Information about hearing loss, treatments, research findings, publications is available from:

www.mayoclinic.com/health/hearing

www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing

www.asha.org/public/hearing

www.stanford.edu/home/medcenter

www.audiology.org

www.nad.org

www.hearingloss.org

www.asha.org/public/hearing

www.agbell.org