



# HEARING HEALTH

BETTER HEARING. BETTER UNDERSTANDING. BETTER LIVING.

Spring 2015

## SPRING INTO A WORLD OF BETTER HEARING

Can't hear the bird's chirping? You're not alone, you're in the company of about 40 million Americans.



My dad used to jokingly say, "I can't hear you. So I'll just laugh and hope it wasn't a question." I asked why he didn't look into hearing aids. He asked me what everyone does... how much do they cost? *What is the cost of not being able to hear?* When it comes to the purchase of personal items that enhance your quality of life, there's more than one way to measure value.

**Unleash your earning potential.** Using hearing aids reduced the risk of income loss by 90-100 percent for those with milder hearing loss, and from 65-77 percent for those with severe to moderate hearing loss. People with untreated hearing loss lost as much as \$30,000 in income annually. (BHI Study)

**Maintain your cognitive function.** Research shows a link between hearing loss and dementia, leading experts to believe that interventions, like hearing aids, could potentially delay or prevent dementia. Research is ongoing.

**Keep you on your feet.** A Johns Hopkins study showed that people in ages 40-69 with even just mild hearing loss were nearly 3x more likely to have a history of falling. The intensive listening demanded by unaddressed hearing loss may take cognitive resources away from what is needed for balance and gait.

**Relieve stress and lift your mood.** When people with hearing loss use hearing aids, many feel more in control of their lives and less self-critical. One study found that the majority of people with mild and severe hearing loss felt better about themselves and life overall as a result of improved hearing.

**Tame that ringing in your ears.** Hearing aids can help reduce the prominence of tinnitus by amplifying background sound. Just taking the focus off the tinnitus can provide relief for many people. This reduces the stress associated with intensive listening, which alone can help relieve tinnitus symptoms.

**Strengthen your relationships.** Using hearing aids can help improve interpersonal relationships. Of people with hearing loss, more than half of the respondents said using hearing aids improved their relationships at home, their social lives and their ability to join in groups. Many even saw improvements in their romantic lives.

Addressing hearing loss really is a smart buying decision. Let us know if you'd like an evaluation with one of our hearing health care professionals.

## HEARING FUN FACTS

- *Flies are deaf.*
- *Sitting in front of the speakers at a rock concert can expose you to 120 decibels, which will begin to damage hearing in only 7 1/2 minutes.*
- *The inner ears is about the size of a pencil eraser.*
- *The eardrum moves less than a billionth of an inch in response to sound.*
- *Earwax has been useful to anthropologists for studying mankind's early migratory patterns.*
- *Sound travels at the speed of 1130 feet per second, or 770 miles per hour.*
- *A giraffe can clean its ears with its 21-inch tongue.*





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## What's between the ears matters too.

Often people tell me, 'I hear, I just don't understand what is being said.'

We complain of teenagers and young adults that "spoke too quickly" and of understanding conversations in restaurants, group settings, and church. This complaint is a common one.

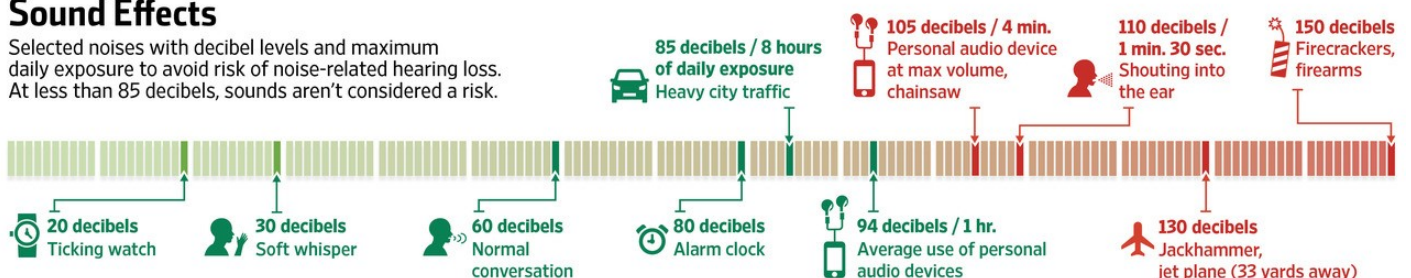
While hearing sense organs (your ears) can be an issue the problem may not **just** be your ears, but what is between your ears (don't get upset, let me explain). All of our sense organs simply provide information to the brain, a supercomputer between our ears that makes sense of what the senses send it. We smell, see, taste, hear and interpret our sense of touch with our brains. As we age, the brain's task of processing complex information takes a little more time. Scientists that conduct research in this area of study find that the **speech understanding** difficulties as we age may not be adequately explained by the degree of hearing loss alone. This phenomenon has led to the hypothesis that age-related central auditory (the part of the brain that gets input from the ears) and **cognitive processing** (thought or memory) deficits likely contribute to speech understanding difficulties.

We all know some fast talkers, some as fast as 180-270 words per minute. It can be hard to keep up. That is why it is crucial to boost the sensitivity of the ear when there is hearing impairment. The brain can't make good decisions without good information. **Hearing aids play a role.** These small, specifically-tuned electronic device designed to make as much speech information available to the auditory portion of the brain as possible. Use of **good communication habits** are also key. Ask individuals to speak more slowly and clearly. Remember this simple rule of thumb: the more important the message is likely to be, the quieter you should attempt to make your listening environment.

If you are having trouble understanding what people say please mention this to your ENT doctor or audiologist to see what options are available.

## Sound Effects

Selected noises with decibel levels and maximum daily exposure to avoid risk of noise-related hearing loss. At less than 85 decibels, sounds aren't considered a risk.



Source: World Health Organization

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.





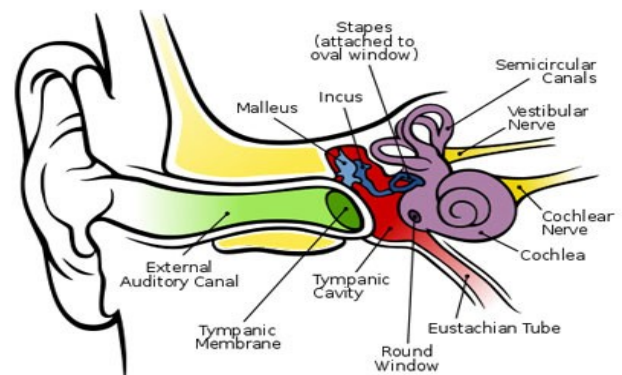
## Ears can feel full or make noises: Popping, Crackling, Fluid-Sensation

The middle ear space (colored in with red) is an air-filled region of the ear that is cut-off from the outside world except for one 1.5 inch long passageway called the eustachian tube which opens into the back of the nose. If the eustachian tube doesn't open normally, the middle ear space becomes isolated.

When the eustachian tube functions normally, when you swallow, yawn, blow your nose, your ear pops. This popping is when the eustachian tube opens allowing air to pass from the middle ear to the back of the nose which is open to the environment.

### So why does the ear feel full sometimes?

Assuming there is no underlying condition, the ear symptoms are due to the inability to pop their ears easily (or if even able to pop the ears, it closes back up quickly.) There is a **pressure difference** between the air pressure in the middle ear (red space) and the pressure outside across the eardrum (green space). This creates a sensation of fullness. By popping the ears the pressure difference will typically normalize.



### What would cause the eustachian tube to not open up properly?

Something could be physically blocking the opening of the eustachian tube in the nose, most notably large adenoids. In rare cases, it could even be a tumor. In-office nasal endoscopy may be required to evaluate for these possibilities. More commonly, the eustachian tube does not open properly due to inflammatory conditions, **especially allergies**, resulting in the tube becoming inflamed and swollen. This condition is known as **Eustachian Tube Dysfunction**.

### What are possible treatments?

Treatment is based on the underlying condition. If due to Eustachian Tube Dysfunction, then treatment is with steroid and anti-histamine nasal sprays for about 3-4 weeks along may be helpful. Throughout this time period, one must try to pop the ears 15-20 times per day (hourly) and also immediately after nasal spray use. Occasionally, oral steroids like prednisone and singulair are also prescribed. If allergies or sinus infections are the culprit these need to be addressed as well.

### Other conditions can cause a sensation of Ear Fullness

A formal ENT evaluation is necessary if symptoms are bothersome or persistent. Contact Us to be evaluated by our team of specialists if you have ongoing ear complaints.

#### What else can cause ear fullness?

- Meniere's Disease
- Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss
- Earwax
- Swimmer's Ear
- Fluid behind the ear drum
- Large hole in eardrum
- TMJ



# Our Hearing Health Care Team



## Contact Us

Give us a call for more info about our services / products

Hickory  
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Hickory, NC 28601  
Phone: 828-322-2183

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Visit us on the web at  
[www.carolinaearnosethroat.com](http://www.carolinaearnosethroat.com)



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What?



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Our **Website** is a great resource !



Access to:

- Our audiology newsletters
- Our PATIENT PORTAL
- Information on audiologic and balance testing
- Frequently asked questions and more...

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**15% off Mid level**

**10% off Basic level**