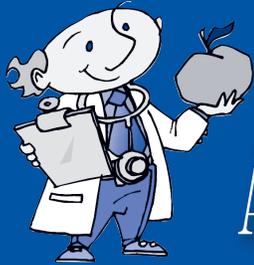


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“Have You Heard?”

N E W S L E T T E R
SPRING 2015

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Ask Your Audiologist

Q. *Every time I come to your office you look in my ears. I'm a little self conscious because it's hard to wash in there. Is it really necessary? What are you looking for?*

A. Gold. We are looking for gold. Under the right conditions, the mixture of ear wax and oil that is manufactured in your ear canal meets the air and presto.... gold! Doesn't happen often but the last nugget we found weighed a full ounce. We got rich and the patient suddenly didn't tilt to that side anymore.

Well, with that little bit of alchemy behind us, let's really try to answer your questions. First, we are glad you don't try to clean inside your ear canal. The ear is self-cleaning. It produces a mixture of wax and oil that gradually moves out on it's own. Some ears are very productive. Some ear canals are

small or curvy. In either case the wax may build up rather than escape. In such cases, we may talk with you about methods to keep the wax from blocking the ear canal and keeping you from hearing well.

But, it's not just wax we are looking for. We look at the entire outer ear and ear drum for irregularities. Ear infections are not just for kids. We see many mature adults with inflamed ear drums. We see holes in the ear drum. We see bony growths in the ear canal. We occasionally see discharge or blood in the canal. At times we see irregularly shaped growths on the ear. Sometimes patients notice the ear feels full, they have recent onset of ringing or the hearing seems worse. Often, they are completely unaware. Some of these conditions require medical or surgical intervention. We are audiologists, not physicians. However, audiologists are trained to identify disorders of the ear. We are concerned about your hearing and your overall health. So, if we see a bit of wax, we may take that out for you. If we see any of those other problems or if you have complaints that suggest a disease of the ear, we are going to ask you to see your primary care physician or an ear-nose-throat specialist.

Did you hear the story about the guy with a tattoo of his ex-girlfriend's name on his ear drum...

OMG!!! I lost my hearing aids!

We lose stuff. Life happens. It stinks. What can you do? Last spring I started wearing the made for iPhone hearing aids, Starkey Halo. One of the cool features of this product is the “find my hearing aid” feature on the iPhone app. Not long ago, I had the “opportunity” to try it out.

I routinely try new products so I can better evaluate their features. If there is an advantage to being an audiologist with hearing loss, this is it. So, I took a new pair home on a test drive and thought I took my Halo hearing aids along. I like to sit in front of the TV or stereo while I switch hearing aids. So, when I reach for my Halos, they aren't there. Hmm. I must have left them on the front counter at the office. I snuck out early that day so I call Wendy for help. She doesn't see them but is certain she saw me put them in my bag. I check the bag again and a couple of other places at home. No hearing aids. But wait, I have Halos. My iPhone will find them. First, I activate the feature that operates like a metal detector for hearing aids. I'm walking around the house but the phone is not finding them. No problem. I activate the feature that uses GPS to tell me the location I last wore the aids. It tells me the aids are at 576 Romence #121. Cool. That's the office. Call back to the office. Wendy and Beth begin the search around my work space – always a scary proposition. No hearing aids. About that time, the lovely, talented and ever helpful Dr. Deiters asks what they are doing. After a brief explanation, she says, “I have them. I was just showing them to someone.” Problem solved. You know if we hadn't gone through all of that, the next day I would have come to work and found the aids sitting right where I left them. But you know under other circumstances, the aids would have been found by the iPhone. I have requested an updated feature to send out a strong electrical shock to anyone who may have kidnapped them.

By the way, new hearing aids always come with a loss replacement provision. This will replace each lost hearing aid one time during the warranty with a small copay. After using the loss plan, some folks have their hearing aids added to their homeowner's policy.



PRODUCT UPDATES

Starkey has introduced a power behind the ear product in its “made for iPhone” product line. This expands the range of hearing loss' that are compatible with the really cool features made available by combining Starkey Halo hearing aids with an Apple iPhone.

Starkey has also introduced the updated SurfLink 2 for connecting their non iPhone compatible devices to TV and cell phones. Your hearing aid picks up your voice as you talk and delivers the received call to your ear without even taking the phone out of your pocket. The TV streamer is wireless and does not require you to wear any other accessory.

Phonak has introduced their V series hearing aids. They have improved their overall noise and wind reduction in their premiere products. Having tried these devices in some very difficult listening situations, I can attest that the noise reduction is impressive. Continuing with their history of technology “trickle down”, noise reduction features previously available only in premier products are now included on mid level products. Music sound quality is also much improved.

Hearing Aids On Vacation



Have a big trip coming up? Don't leave home without your spare hearing aids. If it's been awhile since you've used your back up set, bring them in for us to check a few weeks before your trip. They won't take up much space in your suitcase and you'll be so happy you did if the unthinkable happens – that big wave actually does knock you under water with your aids in your ears.

If you are flying or traveling overseas, make sure your hearing aid Tcoils are working (not available on all hearing aids). Many airports are "looped" and you can pick up announcements directly through your hearing aid Tcoils without all the background noise. Many large public venues in the U.S. and especially in Europe are "looped" so your Tcoils can improve your enjoyment of the productions. Google "hearing loop" for lots more information.

Sometimes the noise on airplanes is just too loud, even for those with normal hearing. If you are resting or not talking, consider turning your aids down or taking them off. My preference is to remove my hearing aids and put on noise cancelling headphones to listen to music or a movie. It is much more relaxing than the continual drone of the engine noise.

If you need special accommodations for your hearing at the hotel, contact them in advance to find what services are available. They are required to provide accommodations for telephone, television, wake up, emergency alerting, and more. Google "ADA hotel requirements for hearing impaired" for lots more information.

Don't forget to take extra batteries and wax traps.



PLUS

BLUE



Many of you are now enrolled in the Medicare Plus Blue health insurance program. This program includes a benefit for hearing tests and hearing aids. The level of coverage depends on your particular plan. We are happy to call in advance of your appointment to be sure of your date of eligibility, copays, deductibles, etc.

There are many positive aspects of this program, but they do place limitations on your hearing aid choices. Plus Blue imposes a maximum price for hearing aids, usually around \$2500 for a pair. This means that when you purchase new hearing aids,

you are limited to choices that do not exceed their maximum. We have nice quality hearing aids that fall within these limits, but they do not include some of the more advanced features that you may want. Plus Blue does not permit "balance billing" so you are not allowed to pay the difference to upgrade. If you foresee this being a problem, please call the member hot line to express your displeasure. Reference their document, Hearing Services R025573. If you'd like to read the document, Google "Plus Blue Hearing Services" and the 2015 revision will magically appear on your computer screen.



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Spring Cleaning

Well, that winter wasn't so bad. We had some serious cold spells and some big snow falls but this is Michigan and it's ever changing. And compared to last winter which lasted until Memorial Day, it was a frolic. Besides, many of you winter haters found a warmer place to hibernate anyway. As always, we welcome the change in seasons with our Spring Cleaning. On Tuesday April 28 and Wednesday April 29 we'll clean your hearing aids, replace tubing, filters and ear hooks, as needed - all for a smile (the penalty for being grumpy has gone up to \$873.52). As always, there will be refreshments while you wait. Drs. Tecca and Deiters will be available to help with your questions about your hearing or hearing aids. These "no charge" visits are intended for routine maintenance. If you need your hearing checked or your hearing aids reprogrammed we'd love to see you on another day when more time will be available to help.



Call **324-0555** to schedule your visit. If you need a spring cleaning and these dates don't work for you we'll be happy to find another time.