

HEARING LOSS IS COMMON: SO WHY AREN'T HEARING AIDS POPULAR?

“Did you know that hearing loss has been cited as the third most common health related problem, and the most common chronic health condition affecting older adults,” asked Dr. Karrie Cuttler, AuD / CCCA at the Ear Nose Throat and Allergy Center.

With over 28 million Americans having some type of hearing loss, only approximately 6 million own hearing aids. “Untreated hearing loss among older persons contributes to their sense of anxiety, depression, and causes social isolation. Persons with hearing loss tend to no longer attend social gatherings, church, or other get-togethers they once enjoyed because they tire of reading lips or constantly asking for repetition,” added Mark Welch, D.O. at the Ear Nose Throat & Allergy Center.

While seniors used to deny their hearing loss completely, a new study found that although a majority of seniors do acknowledge they have a hearing loss, they reported that it has no effect on them. “Because of this, it is usually a spouse, friend, or other family member that initially suggests a communication problem exists,” explains Dr. Welch.

“The advancement in hearing aid technology has been remarkable. With the miniaturization of the digital circuit, hearing aids are now able to amplify only those frequencies of each individual hearing loss without over amplifying those frequencies that are still within the normal hearing range. The digital circuits also allow for noise filters, feedback cancellation, and other advanced features,” explains Dr. Cuttler. Certain hearing aids now have rechargeable batteries! As seen in the GN ReSound *Pulse* hearing aids which can run 20 hours off a single 5 hour charge. This is a great option for those seniors with dexterity problems because hearing aid batteries are very small.

When purchasing a hearing aid, one can expect to spend from \$1200-3000 per hearing aid for a quality digital hearing instrument. It is important to be educated when purchasing a hearing aid. “Purchase price should not be the only consideration in buying a hearing aid. Product reliability can save repair costs and the frustration of a malfunctioning hearing aid,” added Cuttler.

Cuttler suggest asking questions when considering a hearing instrument:

- *What is the warranty on the hearing aids?
- *What if I don't like or can't wear the hearing aids. Can I return them?
- *Do I have to pay for follow-up care for my hearing aid?
- *How long will my hearing aid last?

“Hearing aid options, which are appropriate for your particular hearing loss and listening needs, the size, and shape of your ear and ear canal, and the dexterity of your hands will all be considered in deciding what type of hearing aid is the best for you,” explained ENT specialist Dr. Mark Welch.

Some common symptoms of hearing loss include: ringing in ears, frequently misunderstanding or asking for repetition, turning the television up louder than others, difficulty following television dialog, difficulty understanding on the telephone, history of loud noise exposure, or history of

hearing loss in the family. "If you experience one or more of these symptoms, a complete hearing evaluation from a national certified Doctor of Audiology is recommended," said Dr. Mark Welch. Remember: Hearing loss is more noticeable than a hearing aid!

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