



Accent Hearing
EXCELLENCE IN LISTENING



The Listener

Head Office

Dr Greg Butcher AuD
L5 'The Link'

50 Prince Street
(PO Box 1500)

GRAFTON NSW 2460

Tel: (02) 6643 4044
1300 859 828

Email: admin@accenthearing.com.au



Autumn Edition - 2022

Grafton - Glen Innes - Inverell

www.accenthearing.com.au

Welcome to the Autumn 2022 edition of Accent Hearing's Newsletter *The Listener*. Here we explore helpful hearing tips and news on all hearing matters.

Do Hearing Aids Help with Cognition?



Dementia is currently a leading cause of disability, hospitalisations and deaths for older Australians and has a substantial impact on their families and carers. Risk factors such as age, genetics and family history cannot be changed.

However, several modifiable risk factors have been identified and include hearing loss as well as smoking, depression, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. A range of protective factors have also been identified including physical activity, high levels of education and social engagement.

Hearing loss has been shown to be associated with decreased physical activity and increased self reported falls in older adults. While the mechanisms underlying this association are also not fully understood yet, some studies have demonstrated that impaired hearing can contribute to cognitive load and therefore affect the individual's ability to maintain posture and balance. The question of whether the use of hearing aids can free up some cognitive resources and therefore help to maintain balance still requires more research, although a small number of studies have concluded that hearing aids can result in improved balance in adults with hearing loss. Research shows the clear benefits of hearing intervention and hearing aids in facilitating an active, socially engaged, healthy lifestyle and extend well beyond improved communication. *Audiology Now Magazine 85 Edition 2021.*

Do I have to wear hearing protection i.e. ear muffs or ear plugs whilst working in excessive noise?

Yes, if you want to hear well as you get older.

Tips to Keep Your Ears Healthy

Did you know that diabetes can harm your hearing and your balance? The good news is you can take steps to hear well and reduce your risk of falls.

Make an appointment with all your health care providers, one being the audiologist to assess your hearing as soon as you are diagnosed with diabetes. Bring a list of your medicines and any illnesses and hospitalizations. Your audiologist will look at your history and test results to help you prevent or deal with ear problems. You will discuss ways to protect your hearing and balance. For example:

1. Wear hearing protection around loud noises like lawn mowers, leaf blowers or chain saws etc.
2. Do not clean your ears with objects like cotton swabs, pencils, or paper clips.
3. Eat a healthy diet. You can work with a dietitian or diabetes educator to create a healthy eating plan.
4. Ask your doctor or audiologist if any of your medicines are ototoxic which could harm your hearing.



How Can Diabetes Harm Your Ears?

Diabetes damages small blood vessels in your inner ear and your vestibular system, which is the part of your inner ear that helps with balance. Diabetes can make it harder for signals related to hearing and balance to get to your brain. Hearing loss is more common in people with diabetes. You are more likely to fall if you have diabetes because of damage to your vestibular system.

What Are the Signs of Balance Problems?

Feeling dizzy or lightheaded. Feeling like your head is spinning. Falling or feeling like you may fall.

Hearing Aids Are Just That: *Aids to 'assist' your hearing.*

If you have been fitted with hearing aids, the chances are they should last you approximately 4-5 years if you have looked after them. As with any electronic device, water, from heavy perspiration or from accidentally wearing them in the shower or pool can damage the delicate electronic circuit components and microphones in the devices. So if you perspire a lot, a dry aid kit or humidifier would definitely help with drying the aids daily. If this regular maintenance is not carried out, then the hearing aid will fail and reduce the life of it.

If your speech recognition results are lower than 100%, which is quite possible if you have worked in a lot of excessive noise and have a damaged auditory system, the aids will not bring back your hearing to when you were a teenager (if you had normal hearing thresholds to start with).

Another issue is ear wax! You are required to clean the part that goes in your ear regularly (daily if you produce a lot of ear wax), inspecting either the plastic dome or hard acrylic ear mould for wax blocking any holes—it only takes a small amount. Your audiologist would have shown you this at your fitting or yearly review. If holes are blocked, the sound will not come out making the aid unusable. Don't forget to change the batteries and don't leave them in the aid if you are not wearing them for a few days!



So in other words **'you can't blame the hearing aids'** for either a lack of maintenance and care, or your 'fairly average' speech recognition levels due to a damaged auditory system.

At Accent Hearing we know from experience and that all the hearing aid manufacturers have told us the expected life of a hearing aid is approximately 5 years. So, if you clean your hearing aids regularly and keep them dry not leaving the battery in the compartment if you perspire a lot (as corrosion will be evident) you should have trouble free devices that will help you do what they are supposed to do—aid your listening capacity.

**Have you been offered a
'free' hearing screen lately?
You get what you pay for!**

These types of hearing assessments are as basic as you can get, only giving you 'some sort' of idea you may have 'some form' of hearing loss. Some hearing screens are not even performed by a qualified hearing specialists hence why they are free!



You don't usually get a 'free eye check', a 'free dental check' or a 'free podiatrist check', so why would you get a 'free hearing check'? This type of testing has been unfortunately at the forefront of the large hearing clinics (owned by hearing aid manufacturers) for many years and is luring behaviour to get you into the door of some organisations who may not have your best interests at heart. If you require hearing aids, the actual cost of the 'free hearing screen' will be built into the cost of the hearing aids (which you may have been quoted between \$11,000 & \$14,000). This extremely high cost is not only ludicrous behaviour, but is not necessary and unethical, unfortunately scaring off people with hearing loss, that may be put off doing anything further.

A qualified hearing care professional can provide you with an estimate of prices, starting with the cost for a full hearing assessment and a referral for further medical treatment (if required), including how much hearing aids will cost you (if you actually need them) and a hearing rehabilitation plan to suit each individual.

Because Accent Hearing has a Doctor of Audiology on staff, and as a lot of clients say to us, "Accent Hearing, knows what they are doing", clients have been known to travel up to 2 hours each way to see us for professional help with their hearing.

Study Explains ‘Cocktail Party Effect’ in Hearing Impairment!



Plenty of people struggle to make sense of a multitude of converging voices in a crowded room. Commonly known as the “cocktail party effect,” people with hearing loss find it’s especially difficult to understand speech in a noisy environment.

New research suggests that, for some listeners, this may have less to do with actually discerning sounds. Instead, it may be a processing problem in which two ears blend different sounds together—a condition known as binaural pitch fusion.

Lina Reiss, Ph.D., the research study’s lead author, from the Oregon Health & Science University, attributes these difficulties to abnormally broad binaural pitch fusion in people with hearing impairment. The new study suggests that, for people with hearing impairment, fusing of different sounds from both ears leads to sound blending together in a way that is often unintelligible.

“This differs from what people with normal hearing experience in what is known as the ‘cocktail party effect,’” says Reiss, an associate professor of otolaryngology–head and neck surgery at the OHSU School of Medicine. “People with normal hearing can separate and understand the multiple voices, but they just get confused about which voice is saying what.”

Together with another study showing blending of the fused pitches, the research suggested the possibility that similar fusion and blending could occur with sounds in speech.

Two vowel sounds were played simultaneously through the headphones, with a different vowel sound played to each ear, and with voice pitch varying between male and female voices. Participants were then asked to respond on a touchscreen to identify the specific vowel sounds.

Using statistical analysis, researchers definitively revealed that people with hearing loss experienced abnormal fusion of speech across both ears, even for different voice pitches.

When different vowel sounds were fused, participants heard an entirely new vowel sound. For example, the vowel “ah” (as in “hot”) spoken by a female talker would fuse with the vowel “ee” (as in “heed”) spoken by a male talker, and be heard as “eh” (as in “head”).

“Abnormal binaural fusion may provide a new explanation for the difficulties that hearing-impaired listeners have with understanding speech in multitalker environments,” the authors conclude in the paper.

Reiss calls it a breakthrough, suggesting the possibility of new therapies to improve the perception of speech among the millions of people worldwide with hearing impairment. “This suggests more targeted rehabilitation strategies to improve speech perception in noise,” she says.

Reiss, L.A., Molis, M.R. An Alternative Explanation for Difficulties with Speech in Background Talkers: Abnormal Fusion of Vowels Across Fundamental Frequency and Ears. *JARO* (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10162-021-00790-7>

Symphony For Flood Relief Concert

Accent Hearing, one of the main sponsors of the *Symphony for Relief Concert*, invites you to attend this magnificent event with our local Clarence Valley Orchestra in aid of recent flooding in the Clarence Valley.

Clarence Valley Orchestra

Flood Relief Concert

Saturday 23rd April 2022
Tickets: \$82.00 (includes lunch)
12.00pm Lunch | 2.00pm Concert

“Symphony For Relief”

The Barn
Grafton Showground

Proceeds to
Rotary District 9640
Flood Appeal (includes
Clarence Valley)
& Assistance To
Flood Damaged
Grafton Showgrounds

Eventbrite Tickets
Please Scan

Conducted by our very own Audiologist, tickets are available now. For more information, scan QR code above or follow the Clarence Valley Orchestra Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/clarencevalleyorchestra>

Are you a Government Pensioner?



Australian Government
Department of Health

If you are on the Hearing Services Program (pensioner), from 1 July 2021 you are able to get a yearly appointment to check your hearing, even if you don't have hearing devices. Previously you were only eligible for a new test every 3 years. Clients will be entitled to an annual review from 12 months after their initial assessment or previous review. If you think your hearing has changed and it's been 12 months or more since you last had a hearing assessment, why not phone us to make an appointment.



Hearing Services Program

Accent Hearing is very well-known as an independent trusted and reliable referral for GP or ENT (Ear Nose & Throat) preferred practice for carrying out full diagnostic hearing assessments and successful hearing rehabilitation programs.

This stems from Accent Hearing's history of constant integrity, quality assurance of assessments and effective rehabilitation programs over the last 10 years of practice.



Queen Street Hearing Clinic Update.....



In Accent Hearing's last Newsletter (Summer 2021-2022), you may have noticed that we intend to move the business soon to Queen street, only two blocks away from our current spot. Renovation work has been progressing nicely, but there is more to do than first planned. No moving date is set yet, but we hope to give you more information in the next newsletter, if not before. Thank you to our valued clients who have asked about our move to Queen street and to some who have visited there to find out more. Will keep you posted.

Wax Problems?

Micro-suction is the preferred method to guarantee safe and effective removal of ear wax as well as other foreign bodies that may obstruct the ear canal. If you have wax build up and need to have it removed, why not book in for a consultation.

Please note that an initial, investigative consultation may be required prior to performing the procedure. You will be asked a series of questions and sign a disclaimer in relation to your ear health before any procedure takes place.



***Please use a wax softener effectively before your appointment, available at our clinic or your local chemist. We have instructions to give you for 'effective use' to avoid extra appointments.**

Accent Hearing Clinics - 1300 859 828

- **GRAFTON** | L5 'The Link' 50 Prince Street, Grafton Shopping World, Grafton NSW.
- **GLEN INNES** | Glen Innes Chiropractic Centre, 113 Meade Street, Glen Innes NSW.
- **INVERELL** | Inverell Hospital Community Health, 41 Swanbrook Road, Inverell NSW.

Accent Hearing is independent and is locally owned. Our clinician Dr Greg Butcher is an Accredited University trained Doctor of Audiology; a full CCP Member of Audiology Australia & Independent Audiologists Australia; and a qualified Government & Medicare Hearing Services Provider.