

Queen Street Clinic Update.



Our new Clinic is still in the process of many renovations for it to become a commercialised and much safer building. Council regulations have made the move very difficult and no moving date is set yet.

Hearing Aid Battery Tips!

1. Let the battery "breathe" for 3-5 minutes. After removing the tab from the battery, let the battery sit for 3-5 minutes before installing it in your hearing aid. This "activation" time allows air to reach the materials inside the battery and activate them.



2. Wash your hands thoroughly before changing batteries. Grease and dirt on the batteries may damage the hearing aid. Also, grease and dirt can clog up the air pores in the battery.

3. When you're not wearing your hearing aid, turn it off or open the battery door to minimize battery drain. Leave the battery compartment of your hearing device open at night so moisture can escape (take the battery right out if you can see any water on the battery door). Doing so will keep the battery from corroding and damaging the hearing aid.

4. Remove the batteries entirely if you won't be using the device for an extended period of time. This also helps to avoid corrosion and damage from trapped moisture.

5. Check the expiration date on the batteries. The further out the batteries are, the fresher they are. Over time, batteries will drain slightly while sitting on the shelf. Ideally, you should buy batteries that have an expiration date a year or further from your purchase date.

6. Use the oldest pack of batteries first. The newest packs will have the furthest expiration date than your older packs of batteries. You want to ensure that you use the oldest batteries first, so that you are getting the most life out of them.

7. Keep the stickers on the battery. The sticker tab on the battery keeps the battery "fresh." As soon as the sticker is removed, the battery is activated and starts draining. You want to make sure you don't peel the sticker tab off until you need to use that battery.

8. Keep the batteries in a cool dry place. Storing new, unused batteries in extreme temperatures can cause the battery to drain/have a shorter life.

9. When you change your hearing aid batteries, be sure to place them in a child and pet-proof container immediately, until you can take them to a recycling center or bring them to Accent Hearing for us to dispose of. Do not leave them on a counter or throw them in the trash.

Are you a Government Pensioner?

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.



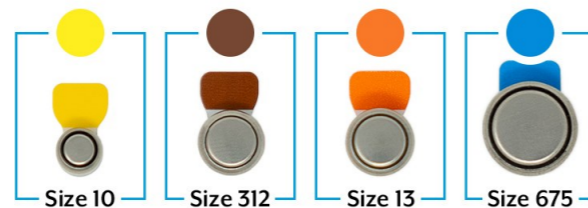
Australian Government
Department of Health

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 GPs or ENTs (Ear Nose & Throat Specialists). It is the 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 in assessments and effective rehabilitation programs over the last 11 years of practice.



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 a University trained Doctor of Audiology; a fully Accredited Member of Audiology Australia; Vice President of Independent Audiologists Australia; and a qualified Government & Medicare Hearing Services Provider.



Winter Edition - 2023

Grafton - Glen Innes - Inverell

Welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of Accent Hearing's Newsletter *The Listener*. Here we explore helpful hearing tips and news on all hearing matters.

Newborns begin language processing just hours after birth



Babies appear able to successfully differentiate speech sounds shortly after being born, according to research published in *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Researchers from Bangor University (Wales) collaborated with researchers in China for this study of newborns at Peking University First Hospital.

Researchers examined the neuroplastic changes to the brain caused by five hours of postnatal exposure to random recorded sequences of vowels. They repeated the assessment two hours later. Babies in the experimental group heard the same stimuli both times while the other two groups were either trained with different vowels or experienced silence.

After five hours, researchers noted that the experimental group started differentiating between the forwards and backwards vowels. Their response to forwards vowels became faster than to backwards vowels—and that response appeared to strengthen after two hours, as compared with the other two

The Listener

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"Newborns benefit directly from being talked to from the very first moments they have left the womb," says study author Guillaume Thierry, professor of cognitive neuroscience at Bangor University.

The mouth and tongue movement is vital when we pronounce a word with vowels in it. Speaking such words requires our tongue to move forward and backward. The letters which need a forward movement are known as Front Vowels, whereas those letters which require backward movement are known as Back Vowels.

Speech intelligibility & classroom acoustics in schools

Good verbal signals and low background noise are key factors for all children to maximise understanding of what is being taught.

Classroom shape, surroundings, and even some furnishings change how the environment "sounds" and how speech is "heard" in the classroom.

Classroom acoustics is perhaps one of the most important, but often least considered, factors when designing a classroom.

A recent review highlighted the negative effect on intelligibility associated with poor transmission of speech and poor classroom acoustics caused by long reverberation times and high background noise.

Good classroom acoustics are required to improve speech intelligibility and, therefore, increase children's academic success.



Mumbling actors, bad speakers or lazy listeners? Why is everyone watching TV with subtitles on?

Subtitles aren't just for the hard of hearing, with Netflix reporting 40% of its viewers regularly use them, while 80% switch them on at least once a month – stats that far exceed the number of viewers who need captioning because of hearing impairment. But do we just enjoy them or is there a more annoying reason?

There are, of course, a myriad of reasons why someone might turn on the subtitles: a sleeping baby in the other room they don't want to wake, a noisy flight path above, or an unintelligibly thick accent from an international actor (something that is becoming more common as streaming brings television from around the globe into our homes).

When it comes to intricately plotted prestige television, subtitles can help you follow what's happening if you're prone to scrolling through Instagram at the same time as tuning in. Or sometimes the fun can be found in laughing at how truly terrible some subtitling is. But if you're switching subtitles on because you simply can't make out what the actors are saying, it's (probably) not your ears that are to blame. Hard-to-hear dialogue is a known issue in the industry, says the sound mixer Guntis Sics, who has worked on movies including *Moulin Rouge!*

and *Thor: Ragnarok*. There are a lot of contributing factors but, paradoxically, it all comes back to advances in technology. "As technology evolved, especially when it took the leap to digital, a tsunami of sound appeared all of a sudden," Sics says. The problem starts on the movie set. In decades past, actors had to project loudly towards a fixed microphone. The advent of portable mics has allowed a shift towards a more intimate and naturalistic style of performance, where actors can speak more softly – or, some might say, mumble. It's an approach to acting Sics says has been around for a long time now, but something he's certainly noticed more in younger performers.

"Tony Hopkins on Thor spoke like a normal human being, whereas on a lot of other films, there's a new style with young actors – it's like they just talk to themselves. That might work in a cinema, but not necessarily when it gets into people's lounge rooms," he says.

Other technological advances have also complicated things. As audio tech became more sophisticated, film-makers started including more sounds: where we once would have heard a door slam as someone angrily exited an apartment, today we also get the handle turning, a clock ticking and a character heavy breathing. And when sound is mixed with the best possible audio experience in mind – say, at a cinema – much of that detail can be lost when it's folded down to laptop speakers, or even your television. It's often the dialogue that suffers most.

Because back in the day – "when TVs were just TVs," as Sics says – the small, tinny speakers they came with pushed out the high frequencies where the voice sits clearly and loudly. But as technology progressed, Sics says, electronics companies began to expect consumers to buy their own sound system separately. Relying on the TV's small built-in speakers could leave you with a subpar experience. But even if you do invest in an expensive speaker set-up, failing to tune it perfectly to your living room means you may end up hearing the big explosions better, but not voices.

"Think back to the old black and white movies and how clear the dialogue is there – it's partly to do with the speaker technology," Sics says. "Today you might get lucky, plug your speakers in and it sounds perfect. But most people plug it in, and all of various frequencies bounce off the walls and confuse what you're listening to. If you set it up in a room with no carpet and just floorboards, it's not going to sound like it should. Whereas the old tinny speaker managed to cut through that."

This may explain why home audiences are missing words or lines that include crucial plot details, and are leaving it to the subtitles to pick them up. But he believes some acoustic problems can be addressed with a couple of quick fixes at home. First, look for the speaker setting on your TV optimised for speech; wind up the treble if that's an option, as that will allow you to hear voices more clearly. Try to reduce background noise by switching off noisy appliances like the dishwasher before you sit down to watch television. And throw a rug down if you've got a lot of hard surfaces in your living room, to prevent reverberation.

Sometimes it may not be the audio quality that is the true sticking point and the issue maybe in the form of a person's attention span. That's a problem a rug won't solve!



Headphone Dependency Widens The Generation Gap.

There has been a lot of talk about how the streetscape of our towns and cities, not to mention our workplaces, have drastically changed since Covid lockdowns.

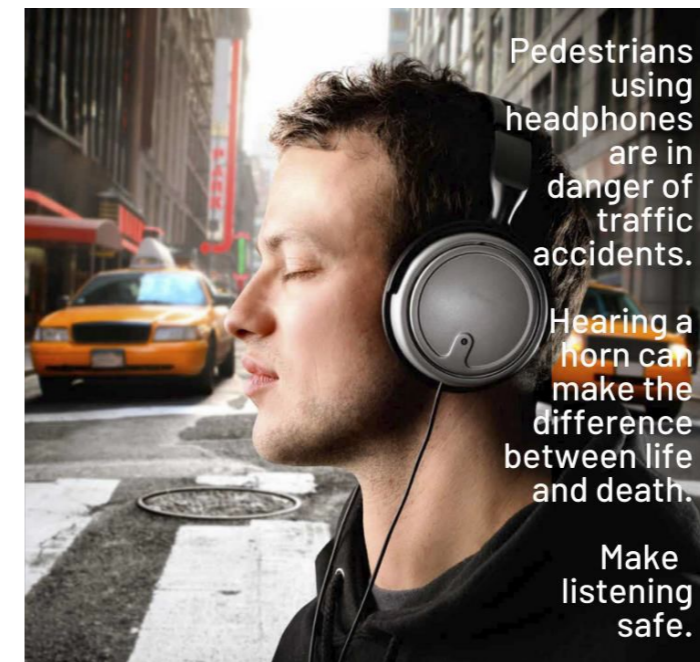
But the biggest change is the silence.

Whether it be on public transport, in a shopping centre or in the middle of a bank of desks in the office, a sizeable slice of the 25 to 40-year-old working population is, thanks to their headphones, with us but not with us: no chatter in the sandwich queue; no rows over pushing in; not even a flicker of recognition and a meeting of eyes.

For those whose heads are unadorned by any tech, it can feel like walking on to the set of some dystopian sci-fi drama. Danger lurks – from the millennials cycling or e-scooting along with the headphones on, eyes open but minds firmly in another reality; or for the pedestrians halfway through a conversation relayed through pods or headphones and prone to stepping into the traffic at any moment because they are blanking out those fine-tuned



skills an older generation has developed to listen out for traffic approaching from your blindside. "It can widen the generational gap," says Cristina Odone, head of the UK's family policy unit at the Centre for Social Justice. "We are tribal beings. We are all about connection, and headphones break connection."



New 'e-whistle'.



Kate is a young New Zealander. She invented a device that helps people with a hearing impairment play team sports.

The 'e-whistle' gives an electronic signal when the sports whistle is blown. Her innovation is a brilliant tool for inclusion. It will allow people with hearing loss to better participate in sports.

www.deafnessforum.org.au

Are you a 'SO'?



If you are, you will be a family member or friend who lives closely with a hard of hearing person, helping those communicating with them on a daily basis.

It is very important the SO or 'Significant Other' accompanies the person with the hearing loss to a hearing assessment so that the SO can really understand what is going on and how they can help the person with the hearing loss. So many people come for a hearing assessment by themselves; they then go home with hearing aids if required and the SO expects they will have 'bionic ears' and will be able to hear everything, including the SO speaking from 3 doors down the hall way in another part of the house. WRONG! The SO, needs to work with the hearing impaired person on a daily basis at home.

Examples include: get the person's attention first; speak slower and clearly face to face; reduce any background noise for a good conversation; don't speak with a mouth full of food or cover mouth; make sure the light is on the speaker's face. All these will help the communication flow if practiced.