



Accent Hearing
EXCELLENCE IN LISTENING



The Listener

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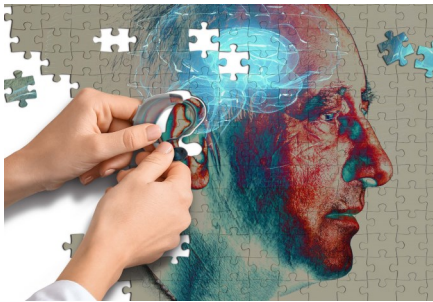
Spring Edition - 2023

Grafton - Glen Innes - Inverell

www.accenthearing.com.au

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

Can Treating Hearing Loss Result in Cognitive Improvement?



A 2020 Australian study examined the effect of hearing aid use on cognition. The new data has emerged validating the theory that treating hearing loss can impede or

perhaps even reverse cognitive decline. Additionally, it appears that combining treated hearing loss with greater social connection to other people can have a positive impact on cognition.

The new data implies that when hearing loss is addressed with properly fitted and tuned hearing aids, cognitive decline can be prevented (or slowed). Even more fascinating – the limited research suggests that cognitive rebound can and has occurred.

Benefits of social connection – Fighting isolation and loneliness

Older adults may suffer from social isolation and loneliness when, as a result of their hearing loss, they are cut off from family, friends and others in their community, and those conditions can have a significant impact on their health.

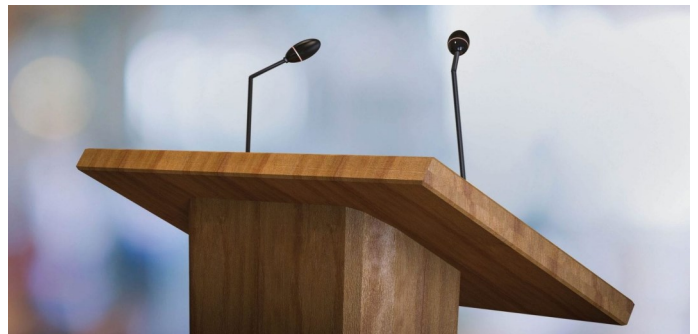
According to research by Dr. Stephanie Cacioppo, loneliness automatically triggers a set of related and biological processes that contribute to the association between loneliness and premature death in people of all ages. However, for those with uncorrected hearing loss, the inability to communicate effectively with others may accentuate the sense of isolation and disconnection from others.

One 2019 study of 1691 adults aged 50+ concluded that there is a correlation between loneliness and cognitive decline, noting that, "interventions that include the enhancement of social participation and the maintenance of emotionally supportive relationships might contribute to cognitive decline prevention and risk reduction."

On the positive side, it may be feasible to reverse cognitive decline if social isolation is ended. Additionally, one post-COVID-19 study in Scotland indicated that when social isolation ended, cognitive decline was reversed, and symptoms dissipated. This is a positive for those with uncorrected hearing loss who then obtain hearing aids. And for those who lack social connection but obtain captioning telephones, their world of connection to others can be opened, potentially reversing cognitive decline that resulted from their lack of contact with others. The studies indicated that untreated hearing loss can result in social isolation, which can cause noticeable cognitive decline. But the decline can potentially be reversed once hearing loss is mitigated and social interaction is initiated.

Yes Minister, We Can't Hear You!

We often ask our clients at their appointment "How well are you hearing at church? **Many say OK, UNTIL THEY WALK AWAY FROM THE MICROPHONE!**



We recommend to ask your Minister to either stand directly in front of the microphone, or to purchase a small clip on wireless microphone system so that 'everybody including those with hearing loss' can hear them whilst they are walking around. It is an easy fix for 'all' of those in the congregation to 'hear' what the minister has to say.

Are you particularly bothered by loud sounds?

Do you find the cinema intolerably loud?
Stick fingers in your ears when a train screeches to a stop?
Enraged when a toddler hammers the hardwood floors with a toy and screams?
Does being at a loud party or restaurant stress you out?
Do you find sweet relief in wearing earplugs or escaping to a quiet place?



Hyperacusis?

Many people have reduced tolerance to everyday sounds that are not usually harmful to our hearing. This oversensitivity to sound is a disorder called **Hyperacusis**, sometimes referred to as **Decreased Sound Tolerance (DST)**. Up to 15% of people may have reduced sound tolerance, although the numbers vary widely in the scientific literature.

The most commonly reported sounds that trigger negative emotional responses such as annoyance, pain or fear are:

- Low frequency sounds such as drilling machines, traffic noise, and dogs barking
- High frequency sounds like dishes rattling, crying children, applause, dentists drill, metal shopping carts, pots and pans clanking
- Broadband sounds such as from a TV or speech, alarms and kitchen machines
- Sudden sounds like hammering, a car horn or a door slamming

Although it is often linked with hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing in the ear), it is not a precondition. Severe cases of reduced sound tolerance can be very debilitating and result in a poor quality of life. The reduced sound tolerance can be seen as a threshold shift. What the average person considers normal sound levels can be screamingly loud to someone with reduced sound tolerance. Most people have a hearing threshold of pain from 120dB, which is a bit louder than a rock concert or a jackhammer. Below that, we can find a loudness discomfort level, normally around 100dB, which is about the noise level when riding a motorcycle. It is typical for those suffering from reduced sound tolerance to have a loudness discomfort level below 80dB, the level of someone shouting. In practice, this 20dB difference is equivalent to 4 times the perceived loudness!

Earplugs must help Hyperacusis, right?

Many sufferers end up wearing double hearing protection in the form of earplugs and earmuffs. Unfortunately, isolating or shielding yourself from daily sounds actually makes the condition worse. Studies have found that overuse of hearing protection may actually cause reduced sound tolerance, in addition to worsening an existing condition. It becomes a vicious circle where you unknowingly train your ear and brain to become more sensitive and alert to sounds that in reality are not damaging to your hearing.

***Please remember we are not talking about industrial noise in which you do require hearing protection.**

How is Hyperacusis treated?

Treatment is usually based on counselling, sound training, and cognitive therapy, sometimes combined with physical aids like broadband noise generators. The good news is that treatment has a high success rate and most patients are cured or have greatly reduced symptoms and a better quality of life. A key insight in treatment is the realization that normal sound levels are not immediately harmful, and the treatment aims to retrain and re-calibrating the connection between the ear and the brain. However, this process usually takes months, and many people have at this point become dependent on their earplugs and stopping the use of earplugs “cold turkey” can be very difficult and painful. Conventional earplugs can be problematic because they reduce so much of the sounds in the higher frequency range. Ref: *“Hyperacusis and Disorders of Sound Intolerance: Clinical and Research Perspectives”* by Prof. [Marc Egelson](#) (Author), & [David M. Baguley](#) (Author).

A gentle reminder for all staff working in cafés with paying customers!

Accent Hearing has been working behind the scenes with a campaign on educating the café & restaurant staff on how to 'recognize' the noise they may be making whilst setting out tables & tableware etc.

We are sure all cafés would want their clientele to return and enjoy their menus for many years, however, with the scraping of chairs across a tiled or wooden floor, the dropping of cutlery onto dirty plates, the metallic sounds of banging coffee porta-fillers, this can be very disruptive, sometimes making the customer go somewhere else to eat at a quieter place.

A Café or Restaurant is a place to meet or socialise, having a great meal and to actually talk and 'communicate easily' to others at the table.



These sounds can be very sensitive to your customer's ears of any age. Sensory overload or auditory hypersensitivity is quite common in the elderly and also for those wearing hearing aids, have hyperacusis, misophonia, ASD or ADHD.

The heightened awareness is found in ordinary noises which become very unbearable, causing discomfort or distress and can be painfully loud. The normal day sounds mentioned above are usually not heard 'as loud' by younger staff members setting up tables, so they are generally not aware of what they are doing in their actions.

Another problem with current design trends of cafés & restaurants is that they usually exacerbate the problem. Repurposed industrial spaces with concrete floors and brick walls are popular venues for restaurants and bars. Interior designers favour ceramic tiles, exposed ceilings, open floor plans, and uncovered tables. Although called 'trendy', these hard surfaces reflect and amplify sound. Open kitchens and attached bars also increase noise levels. The heavy curtaining, deep carpets and tablecloths traditionally used to muffle noise have fallen out of favour with restaurant designers. Public places are required by law to accommodate disabilities. This would include reducing amplified sound or providing a quiet place for diners with hearing loss.

Loud restaurants not only discriminate against people with hearing loss but can actually contribute to that hearing loss. Everyone thinks that hearing loss is a normal part of aging, however, it's not. The major cause of hearing loss is noise exposure, and it's entirely preventable. "Noise is the leading cause of complaint when dining out". <https://www.tastingtable.com/908336/the-real-reason-some-restaurants-blast-music/>

To help with this, Accent Hearing has designed a small business card size reminder for customers to

hand out to staff managers who have venues that 'are not that noise friendly'. Please ask a couple to hand out the next time you see us to spread the word!

A gentle reminder to all Wait Staff in reducing background noise....

The sound of dropping cutlery, knocking crockery & glasses together or dragging chairs across floors whilst table setting or clearing, can be very sensitive to your customer's ears, causing discomfort and is sometimes painfully loud.

Accent Hearing - T: 6643 4044

Would you like to attract GPs to our area?

The Clarence Valley Orchestra (CVO) conducted by our Audiologist Greg Butcher, has partnered up with the University of Wollongong (UOW) and is now raising funds for the first **Clarence Valley Orchestra Medical School Scholarship**. The regional program has been running in the Valley for a number of years now which attracts students in their 4th year of study in the Doctor of Medicine Program, to come and work in the Clarence Valley with the view of them returning as a permanent GP. Given the fact that there is a GP shortage in most



rural areas, this is something we hope the Valley will get behind and support. This is outside the usual CVO Music Scholarships open to all CVO members annually. **Fundraising will commence at CVO's next performance 'An Afternoon at The Pops' - The Musicals of Broadway at the Saraton Theatre, Sunday 29th October.**

Tickets have been on sale for a few months now, so scan in the QR code with your mobile for more details before tickets sell out. We look forward to seeing you there.



Are you a Government Pensioner?

If you are on the Hearing Services Program as a pensioner, 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.



PROVIDER

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 12 years of practice.



Queen Street Clinic Update.....

Our new Hearing Clinic has just had one of the major improvements finished recently, that of a new driveway with off-street parking, one of the many requirements from Clarence Valley Council. There's still more work to carry out inside, however we are hopefully moving in early January 2024. We will notify you when a date is confirmed.

Please make sure your physical address, email address and telephone contacts are up to date. There will also be an Open Week at the new Hearing Clinic in 2024, so keep an eye out for the latest news.

The new clinic address will be 23 Queen St Grafton.



BACKGROUND NOISE!!

Hearing in background noise is what most hard of hearing people complain about the most. However, people without hearing loss also complain about it. There are just so many sounds at different frequencies and volumes bouncing around a busy room for you to be able to pick up whatever you are trying to listen to. If you do have hearing loss, when you are in an environment with a lot of background noise, please remember to use your 'speech in noise program' and turn down the volume if required. **Do not take your hearing aids out!** Many new hearing aid wearers make this mistake and unfortunately never get used to any noise and eventually stop wearing the hearing aids. You may need to reduce the volume of your hearing aids, however still be able to have a little amplification for picking up speech in noise. **Your brain actually needs to practice 'filtering out' the attention you give to background noise for you to focus on the speaker.** This sometimes takes time for your brain to adjust, through brain plasticity, (the rewiring of neural pathways) and takes perseverance. If you are not sure if your hearing aids actually have a 'Speech in Noise' or a 'Restaurant' program in them, why not make an appointment.

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 Medicare Hearing Services Provider.