

Hearing HealthCare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends



Spring

The Cost of Hearing Loss

Good hearing healthcare costs money. The cost of hearing testing, hearing aids, batteries and assistive listening devices all adds up. Although some insurance plans provide assistance, many do not.

But as significant as these costs are, the costs of untreated hearing loss are even greater.

Survey data from the Better Hearing Institute suggests that *untreated* hearing loss accounts for about \$100 *billion* in lost income every year. Lost income for untreated loss averaged from \$1,000 a year (for someone with a mild loss) to \$12,000 a year (for those with severe loss). That loss is cut in half for hearing aid users.

But there are also hidden costs of untreated hearing loss.

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Top 5 Reasons Why You Should Not Get Hearing Aids

Most people who read our newsletter have recognized and accepted that they have hearing loss, sought professional care, and now use hearing aids regularly. As a result, both they and their families enjoy a fuller and more enjoyable life.

But what about the person who has a significant hearing loss, but hasn't done anything about it? Believe it or not, many people with hearing loss have *not* taken any positive steps toward better hearing.

Perhaps there are reasons for not seeking professional help and reasons for not using hearing aids. Here are a few reasons we've heard—and some thoughts to consider.

items that have not increased in inflation-adjusted cost over the past 10 years, in spite of dramatic improvements in technology. As a result, people today get improved capabilities for less money.



People who don't get help for their hearing loss sometimes put special demands on the people around them.

"My hearing isn't that bad."

Could be. But have you asked the people around you? You may not realize that the television is turned louder or that people have to repeat themselves for you to understand them. As the *New York Times* put it, hearing loss is "*often not obvious to others or even to those who have it.*"

"People will see them."

Well, probably not. For the most part, *the only one who sees your hearing aids is you.* Walk around a shopping mall or any place where there are a lot of people and you'll pass a dozen people wearing hearing aids. Do you notice them?

What people *do* notice is someone who says, "*What did you say?*" or answers the wrong question, or sits quietly because he or she can't follow the conversation.

"My family can talk a little louder."

It's not unusual for someone to be unaware that he or she has a hearing loss because family members talk louder and put up with loud television, and perhaps the loud voice of the person with the hearing loss. But is that fair to them?

Eventually, family members begin to talk less and less with the person with untreated hearing loss because the effort is just too much. Research shows that individuals who don't get help for their hearing loss gradually become more and more socially isolated.

"Hearing aids are expensive."

Yes, they are. On the other hand, hearing aids are one of the few healthcare

"Hearing aids don't help much."

Not true. What *is* true is that hearing aids don't restore normal hearing and can't make it possible to understand everything in a noisy restaurant or on every TV channel. In most cases, hearing aids allow you to hear pretty well *most of the time.* Hearing aids enable you to hear with less effort, to watch television at normal volume—and make it possible for the people around you to talk at a normal level and without repeating themselves.

There may be other reasons for putting off getting help, even though very effective help is available. But for many people, their feelings about their hearing loss is a more serious issue than the hearing loss itself, especially when those feelings prevent them from taking productive steps toward *hearing as well as possible.*

Captioned Television

Did you know that your television set probably has *closed captioning* already available?

Most television programs are now captioned. Some live programs, such as baseball games, have *real-time captioning*, with someone typing the text as the announcer is speaking.

The captions are displayed when you turn on the built-in decoder. This is usually done using the television remote control, under the option "*menu*" or "*program.*"



Distractions such as cell phones, loud music and traffic can make driving a stressful experience. The challenges are even greater for drivers with hearing loss. Here are some suggestions for safe driving:

- Make frequent use of all side and rearview mirrors when changing lanes and passing.
- If having a conversation while driving distracts you, ask passengers not to communicate with you unless necessary. You can't read lips while driving!
- Keep the car radio volume to a minimum so you can hear traffic sounds.
- Using a cell phone while driving is definitely *not* recommended. Studies by the National Transportation Safety Board show that the use of *any* cell phone, including hands-free devices, causes significant distraction.
- Check your turn signal indicator occasionally to make sure it's not blinking needlessly. Many turn signals are difficult to hear over the sound of traffic, engine noise and the radio.