

Hearing Associates
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Hearing Associates Fall 2023 Newsletter

Fall has arrived and with it, another season of helping our patients optimize their hearing health. The Hearing Associates team celebrated several work anniversaries, and we're grateful to each team member for their years of service!

Read the articles inside to learn about managing hearing aid expectations, Bluetooth hearing technology and more in this edition of our quarterly newsletter.

Celebrating the Hearing Associates' Team

Several of our team members celebrated work anniversaries over the past several months.

Collectively, the following individuals have 48 years of experience serving our patients:

- **Carmen Wickering**, Hearing Aid Specialist – 6 years
- **Dr. Christine Heintskill**, Audiologist – 8 years
- **Corrine**, Front Office Professional – 2 years
- **Dr. Bryce Phillips**, Audiologist – 1 year
- **Dr. Tanya Harper Rowe**, Audiologist – 27 years
- **Brittany**, Front Office Professional – 4 years
- **Tanner**, Patient Care Coordinator – 4 years

We express our heartfelt thanks to all for their years of dedicated service. Here's to many more!

Learn About Aural Rehabilitation at Hearing Associates

Aural rehabilitation involves therapies and techniques designed to help you live well with hearing loss, including developing effective listening techniques and tackling hearing challenges.

"Your Hearing Journey" is a series of classes where you'll receive the support of healthcare professionals and others who share similar experiences. Learn how to maintain your hearing aids, communicate effectively and protect your hearing health.

Support partners are also welcome to attend!

Combatting Homelessness in Iowa

The Hearing Associates' team is committed to giving back. Over the years, we've contributed to a variety of nonprofit organizations and community entities in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa.

We're excited to announce that we will be donating a portion of all hearing device sales during the months of November and December to the homeless shelters of northern Iowa, including the Northern Lights Alliance for the Homeless Shelters (NLAHS) and The Beacon.

The Beacon focuses on helping women who've experienced homelessness, substance addiction and incarceration by creating a supportive environment for them to recover. NLAHS provides emergency shelter for men, women, families and veterans and helps them find permanent housing.

We look forward to building partnerships with our community partners to assist those in need!

**Now offering
7AM appointments
at select locations!**

Call us for more information.

**Hear in the
Now News**

Fall 2023

Providing excellent customer service & quality hearing aids to our patients since 1987. Hearing Associates, P.C. is your hearing healthcare expert in Mason City, Northern Iowa, and Albert Lea, Minnesota.



What are Bluetooth Hearing Aids?

They're wireless devices that allow you to stream TV audio, phone calls and music wherever you want.

How Bluetooth Hearing Aids Work

Bluetooth hearing aids wirelessly communicate with other Bluetooth-enabled devices by exchanging radio frequencies to deliver audio to your ears. Some Bluetooth hearing aids stream audio directly while others require a separate device to transmit audio.



Benefits of Bluetooth Hearing Aids

Improved listening experience: You can connect one or both hearing aids to Bluetooth-compatible devices, allowing you to listen without straining your ears.

Custom settings: Bluetooth hearing aids are adjustable via a remote or an app, so you can switch between preprogrammed settings for different environments.

Multiple connections: Connect your hearing aids to compatible smartphones, tablets, computers and TVs.

Easier phone conversations: You won't have to worry about bringing your phone to your ear because the audio will stream right to your Bluetooth hearing aids.

Music and TV streaming: Listen to your favorite music and shows at your preferred volume.

Tinnitus treatment: Some Bluetooth hearing aids have tinnitus sound therapy programs that reduce the effects of the ringing in your ears.



Who Should Wear Bluetooth Hearing Aids?

Do you love listening to music through headphones? Do you watch TV and struggle to hear the show or game? Bluetooth devices are a good option if you're tech-savvy and want a hands-free method to stream audio.

They're also helpful if you have dexterity issues because you won't have to fiddle with settings on the devices themselves. Bluetooth devices use more battery power, so wearing rechargeable hearing aids also eliminates the need for handling small replacement batteries.

Types of Bluetooth Hearing Aids

- ReSound Nexia
- Starkey Genesis AI
- Phonak Audéo L
- Unitron Moxi V
- Signia Pure Charge&GOT AX
- Oticon Real
- Widex Moment

Improve Your Hearing for a Healthy Mind

Researchers have long suspected a connection between hearing loss and cognitive decline.

How Your Ears and Brain Work Together

Your ears collect sounds, but your brain does the "hearing." The outer and middle portions of your ear funnel sound waves through your tympanic membrane, converting them into vibrations. Those vibrations are changed into electrical signals in your inner ear and sent to your brain for interpretation

Hearing loss prevents your brain from receiving the auditory stimulation it needs to stay active. Your auditory cortex can shrink and atrophy without the electrical signals from your auditory nerve. That requires your brain to put forth more effort to try and understand sounds on limited input.

Improving Your Memory

Your brain pulls energy from other cortexes when it must work harder to hear. You may find yourself feeling mentally fatigued after conversations, especially when you're listening in a noisy environment.

Your brain will use more energy to interpret the auditory stimuli, leaving fewer resources for memory formation and retention. That might affect your capacity to create and store short-term memories.

Addressing your hearing loss can help optimize your current hearing ability. Hearing aids amplify and clarify sounds, so your brain doesn't have to work on its own. That reduces your cognitive load, freeing your mental energy to form and recall memories.

Reducing Social Withdrawal

It's not unusual to experience social withdrawal if you live with untreated hearing loss. You may feel intimidated by interacting with others because you don't want to miss out on conversations or ask others to repeat themselves.

That could cause you to avoid social gatherings altogether, resulting in isolation and depression. Losing your ability to interact with others can negatively impact your mental well-being. It's important to stay socially active as you age to provide your brain with the stimulation it needs to stay healthy.

Addressing your hearing loss reduces the likelihood of social isolation. When you hear better, you're more likely to engage with loved ones in person or over the phone. That allows you to exercise your communication skills and cultivate meaningful relationships with others.

Are Your Hearing Aid Expectations Realistic?

It's important to be aware of the reality of the adjustment period, whether it's your first pair or an upgrade from your current hearing aids.

It Will Take Time to Adapt

Your brain needs time to reacquaint itself with processing the auditory stimuli it's been missing. Adjusting to hearing aids takes time depending on your type and degree of hearing loss and hearing aid style.

Be patient with yourself as you get accustomed to your hearing devices. Your brain must relearn how to ignore background audio, so noises like a clock ticking or a refrigerator humming more than before.

Your Voice May Sound Different

It's common to experience a blocked sensation in your ears while wearing your devices. The design could partially or completely cover your ear canal, making your voice seem hollow. Your voice might also sound louder since the device mics are close to your mouth.

Conversations Are More Enjoyable

Some hearing aids have directional microphones programmed to focus on noises in front of you, which is helpful if you're speaking to someone in a noisy environment. With enhanced audio, you're less likely to crane your head forward to hear or read lips to understand. These improvements in conversation allow you to engage and interact without feeling exhausted after.

Your Hearing Aids Should Be Comfortable

Your ears may feel slightly sore for a few days as you get accustomed to wearing an earpiece. Your devices should fit snugly, but you should never experience pain. Talk to your audiologist about getting your hearing aids refitted if you're uncomfortable.

Hearing Aids Require Maintenance

You should practice inserting and removing your devices, handling the settings and replacing batteries. There are also different types of hearing aid batteries and rechargeable options. Clean your hearing aids daily and store them in a secure space away from children and pets. Take your hearing aids to your audiologist periodically for a thorough cleaning and adjustment.

You'll Have Follow-Up Appointments

Most hearing devices come with an evaluation period so you can determine if they're right for you. Digital hearing aids are customizable, so you'll receive follow-up care to adjust them appropriately. Your doctor or hearing instrument specialist will also walk you through Bluetooth connectivity on compatible devices.

When to Upgrade Your Hearing Aids

Hearing aid technology continues to improve, and your hearing can change over time. That's why it's important to know when to consider upgrading your hearing aids.

Factors That Affect the Longevity of Your Hearing Aids

Materials: Hearing aids are made of plastic, silicon, metal and other materials that can degrade over time.

Maintenance: Poor maintenance increases wear and tear on hearing aids over time.

Where they're worn: An active lifestyle exposes your hearing aids to dust, dirt, debris and moisture.

Storage: Opening the battery compartment at night and placing your devices in a dehumidifier reduces the chance of moisture damage. If rechargeable, utilizing a DryBoost UV allows aids to charge and dry simultaneously.

Your physiology: Your body produces sweat, earwax and chemicals that can affect how long they last.

Style: Behind-the-ear devices tend to last longer than in-the-ear hearing aids.



5 Reasons to Upgrade Your Hearing Aids

Your Hearing Aids are More Than 5 Years Old

Modern hearing aids typically last three to seven years, but they can incur wear. Wax buildup and sweat could cause discoloration. Replacement parts are more difficult to find for older devices. Hearing technology changes regularly, so you may need devices that suit your hearing loss.

Your Hearing Has Changed

Various factors such as noise exposure, ototoxic medications and chronic health conditions could increase your hearing loss. Your current devices may no longer address your degree of hearing loss.

You've Made Lifestyle Changes

There are lots of different hearing aid brands and styles that are designed with specific lifestyles in mind. You can also change your hearing aids if you prefer more advanced features or a simpler design than your current model.

Your Finances Have Changed

You may have chosen your current devices because of the price. Additional features and technology usually mean a higher price point. However, if your budget allows, upgrading your hearing devices provides you with an opportunity to reinvest in your hearing.

Your Hearing Aids are Damaged

Your devices are built to last, but they're not immune to damage and moisture. Common signs of hearing aid damage include:

- Sound distortion
- Feedback or whistling
- Low or no volume
- Poor battery life
- Bluetooth connectivity issues