

san francisco
audiology
LIFE IS WORTH HEARING

450 Sutter Street, Suite 934
San Francisco, CA 94108

(415) 692-3135

WE'RE MOVING!

Don't worry we aren't going far. Our Sutter Street office is moving from suite 934 to suite 1400 later this Fall.



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It's your brain that hears.
Not your ears.

Hearing Solutions

Hearing Protection: Tips for Fall

As the leaves begin to change, we encourage you to consider changing your hearing healthcare habits, too. Certain autumn activities can cause noise-induced hearing loss without proper hearing protection. People of all ages should take extra precautions to protect their ears from damage. The following tips are recommended by the Better Hearing Institute.

Use earplugs.

When exposed to loud sounds, wear earplugs to prevent damage to your hearing. Disposable earplugs are readily available and allow you to hear music and conversations while blocking dangerously loud sounds. Custom ear protection crafted from earmolds guarantees a snug fit and dependable protection.

Limit your time in noisy environments.

Take steps to limit the length of time you spend in noisy environments and make sure to give yourself periodic quiet breaks.

Keep the volume down.

When listening to music—especially through headphones or earbuds—keep the volume turned down. If others can hear your music, it's too loud.

Leave the leaf blowing to the professionals.

Leaf blowers represent an extreme noise hazard and are better left to the professionals. The sound produced by some leaf blowers can cause permanent hearing damage in fewer than 15 minutes. If you aren't willing to hire a professional, make sure to wear quality earplugs during yard work.

Realize the risks of football season.

There's no better way to support your team than cheering wildly during a live event, but there's also no better way to damage your hearing. Last year, Kansas City Chiefs fans set a new record for loudest stadium at 142.2 dB—that's louder than a gunshot, jet engine or fireworks. Whether you're attending a high school, college or professional game, earplugs are essential to your hearing safety.

Talk to your audiologist about hearing protection.

Your audiologist can help you find a solution that fits your lifestyle without compromising your performance. From specialty musician's plugs that let you hear the notes risk-free to hunter's plugs that enhance ambient noise while protecting your hearing from gunshots and explosions, solutions are available for a wide range of activities.



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Auditory System Deprivation & ITS LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Hearing only starts with your ears. It is the auditory system, which is composed of the outer ear, the middle ear, the inner ear and the auditory neurological pathway, that allows the process of hearing to occur. That process begins when sound waves enter the outer ear and are channeled through the other complex parts of the ear, the nervous system and into the brain. The physical characteristics of the original sound are preserved as various types of energy that the brain recognizes and identifies as a particular sound. So, in actuality, you hear with your brain!

However, when it comes to maintaining your auditory system, you lose it if you don't use it. Just as the muscles in your body become sore when you exercise after a period of doing nothing, your auditory system will have a hard time getting back into shape should you suddenly decide to wear hearing devices, especially if you have gone a long time without treating your hearing loss. Your brain will lose some of its ability to process information due to lack of stimulation and as a result, it will be more difficult to recognize sounds... even with hearing devices.

To minimize the impact of auditory deprivation, you should address the hearing loss sooner once diagnosed, rather than when the condition gets worse. Providing solutions and positive outcomes for patients with advanced/longstanding hearing loss can be done but with greater challenges as the condition of the neurological system is weak. Early intervention results in better outcomes.

We recommend you receive a baseline hearing test beginning at the age of 40. During this test we can determine the lowest volume level you can hear at various frequencies or pitches. We can then reference this at subsequent testing and monitor changes.

Once your hearing threshold is identified, we encourage you to have periodic hearing tests (every two or three years) to help prevent and/or identify hearing loss earlier than you otherwise might. If you are a hunter, musician, woodworker or are frequently and consistently exposed to loud noise, an annual hearing test is recommended. It is only through preventative care that we can help you prevent further damage to your hearing system.



Poor Heart Health May LEAD TO HEARING LOSS

If you don't watch what you eat and fail to exercise regularly, poor cardiovascular health is not the only risk you'll face. New evidence shows a link between poor heart health and hearing loss. The reason for this surprising correlation? The inner ear is extremely sensitive to blood flow, so obstructions in the arteries and veins—symptoms of impaired cardiovascular health—can impact the peripheral and central auditory systems, leading to hearing impairment. Conversely, when the heart is healthy and the flow of blood is unimpeded, hearing problems are fewer.

The cochlea, a fluid-filled tube in the inner ear that translates sound into nerve impulses, fails to function properly when damaged or subjected to decreased blood flow. A study of 1,600 patients with a history of cardiovascular disease showed they were 54% more likely to experience impaired cochlear function, further evidence of how essential blood flow is to good hearing (Cruikshanks et al., 1998).

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle will not only add years to your lifespan, but will also reduce your odds of developing hearing loss. Doctors recommend taking preventative measures such as eating healthier, losing weight, quitting smoking, and maintaining a healthy blood pressure. If you suffer from hearing loss, you are encouraged to undergo cardiovascular screening to determine whether there is an increased risk to your heart. If you have already been diagnosed with heart disease, consider scheduling a hearing evaluation with an audiologist. Early detection is key to successfully treating hearing loss.

CLINIC NEWS

San Francisco Audiology is participating in two new studies. We are excited about these opportunities to expand our knowledge in ways that will be useful to the community and take part in research that should help lead to better treatment options.

The first study began in August and will last for six months. It focuses on a new type of behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aid specifically geared toward children and adults with severe to profound inner-ear hearing loss and will assess the device's ease of use, convenience and speech processing technologies.

The second study, which started in November, delves into the link between hearing and cognition. It should help us better understand the relationship between untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline.

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