

Sound BYTES

INFORMATION FOR YOUR EARS

COGNITION AND HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss and cognition have been a focus of research over the past decade. Now with numerous studies and reports, researchers have been able to identify a correlation between untreated mild hearing loss and higher risk of early onset of cognitive decline and memory loss.



Currently, the World Health Organization estimates that 466 million people worldwide are living with a disabling hearing loss. This number is estimated to almost **double** by 2050. Similarly, it is estimated about 50 million people globally suffer from dementia, and that number is estimated to **triple** by 2050.¹ Given this rapid increase in both hearing loss and dementia, it is critical to understand how hearing loss may impact cognition.

It is now widely accepted among scientists that depriving the auditory system of stimulation and the increased cognitive load required to process missing

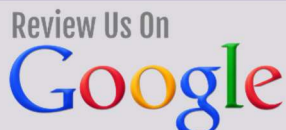
sounds, speech and music that occurs from hearing loss can lead to structural and functional atrophy within the brain. One study found that those living with hearing loss experienced an accelerated rate by as much as 30-40% compared to their peers with normal hearing. While there are several possible modifiable risk factors, early treatment of hearing loss is the number one *modifiable* risk factor for dementia and cognitive decline.¹ Hearing loss is a common and treatable health disorder. If you know someone who continues to put off their hearing health, encourage them to take the first step and schedule a hearing test.

Reference:

1. Med-El. (2021, January 15). *Hearing loss is the number one modifiable risk factor for dementia - med-el professionals blog*. MED. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://blog.medel.pro/hearing-loss-is-the-number-one-modifiable-risk-factor-for-dementia/>



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PROFESSIONAL HEARING SERVICES FAMILY UPDATE

Our PHS family will be growing! Dr. Kasey Gillmore and her husband, Evan, are very excited to announce that they are expecting their first child!

What about my hearing aids?

Dr. Gillmore will be out of clinic late summer and fall for her maternity leave, but have no fear, we are still here to help with your hearing aids. One of our audiologists or audiology assistants will be more than happy to help you while she is out of clinic.

What about New Berlin?

Unfortunately, with Dr. Gillmore out of clinic the hours in New Berlin will be greatly reduced. We anticipate hearing clinic hours a few days each month in New Berlin. As always, we are happy to see you in any of our locations.

Congratulations to Evan and Kasey Gillmore!



YOU GOT QUESTIONS, WE GOT ANSWERS

After our winter newsletter, we received some questions from a few of our great patients and wanted to share the answers.

Q: Changing volume needs, how to assess whether a patient should come in?

A: If you find yourself consistently making a specific volume adjustment, that is something your audiologist can address at an in-person office visit. For many, after a year or two of wearing the devices, they find they just need more volume. If you're finding that you're increasing the volume multiple steps and you feel your hearing may have changed that is a great sign to schedule a hearing test and hearing aid check appointment. When in doubt, if you're having any concerns about your hearing with or without your devices, schedule an appointment with your audiologist. Your audiologist is here to help you hear your best! *Remember if you have a Medicare policy, you must first discuss this with your physicians who will place an order for the hearing test.

Q: What is auditory training and where does it occur?

A: Auditory training is a technique used to enhance listening skills and improve speech understanding. There is a big difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is a passive, involuntary process. Listening is an active process that requires intentional effort. Thankfully, listening and understanding is a skill that can be improved with practice. During your hearing test your audiologist assesses your ability to understand words. If your word understanding score is below 70% you may benefit from auditory training. For our office, auditory training is completed outside the office and typically through an online program. Some popular online auditory programs include the LACE: Listening and Communication Enhancement, Angel Sound, Customized Learning Exercises for Aural Rehab, and Brain HQ: Brain Fitness Program. Some programs are free while others charge a fee.

Q: My rechargeable hearing aid no longer gets me through my day.

A: Rechargeable hearing aids have lithium-ion batteries, so just like your cellphones, your battery slowly drains. Typically, between year two and three you may notice that the charge no longer gets you through your day. Depending on the manufacturer, your audiologist may be able to replace the battery in the office or it may need to go out for repair. When your device no longer lasts as long as you need it to, you should schedule a drop off appointment with our audiology assistant she can determine the next step based on your device. Don't forget you can quick charge your hearing aids for a few extra hours of battery life.

If you have any topics or questions, you would like addressed in our summer newsletter, please do not hesitate to reach out. We love hearing from you!

