

Sound BYTES

INFORMATION FOR YOUR EARS

MOISTURE AND HEARING AIDS

Summer is right around the corner. For many that means more time outdoors, gardening, and on the lake. Wisconsin summers are hard to beat; however, the heat and humidity are no friends to hearing devices. Hearing aids are electronic devices, so they do not prefer extreme temperatures or moisture. This spring we have already seen an increase in moisture issues for many of our patients. Signs of moisture include static, intermittent function, or a completely dead device. Luckily, there are several options to help prevent moisture build-up.

1. Remove your devices before swimming, showering or activities that cause excessive perspiration. Remember: hearing aids are not waterproof.
2. After removing your devices, be sure to wipe them down with a dry, clean cloth.
3. Use a *Hearing Aid Saver*, *Electronic Dryer*, or add a *desiccant* to your rechargeable case. These tools are designed to remove moisture from the devices overnight. All options are available for purchase at the office.
4. For traditional behind the ear hearing aids check your tubing for moisture droplets. If you see droplets disconnect the tube from the ear hook and use a *hearing aid blower* to remove the droplets from the tube.

If you are unsure, we are here to help.



Congratulations, Dr. Vicky Talmage!

We are proud to announce the graduation of our Fourth Year Extern, Victoria Talmage, from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Dr. Talmage was able to attend the ceremony held in Camp Randall on May 8, 2021. We are also excited to announce that Dr. Talmage has joined the staff of Professional Hearing Services and will be practicing out of the Waukesha location. Congratulations on all your accomplishments.



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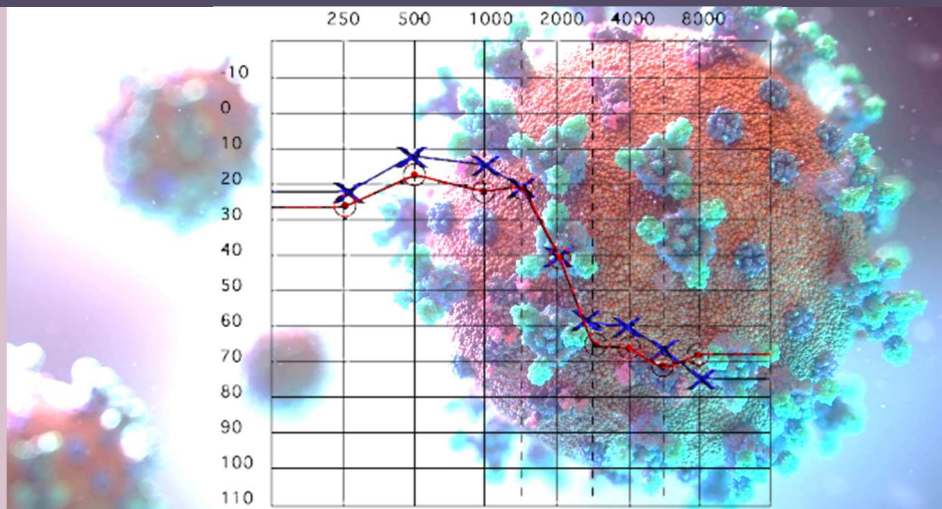
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How Masks Impact Hearing

Masks have become a part of our lives this past year and have impacted our ability to hear and follow conversations. We have learned a lot about how masks impact hearing. First, masks reduce access to visual cues, which aid in our ability to hear speech, especially for those who have hearing loss. We use visual cues to help fill in missing information from the speech sounds that are difficult to hear. Secondly, masks reduce the volume of the speech coming from the person talking. Masks reduce volume by 5-15 decibels depending on the type of mask, according to an article in Healthy Hearing (<https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53084-Face-masks-and-hearing-aids#>). Thirdly, social distancing has led to an overall reduction in volume as we are now spacing ourselves at a safe distance. These three barriers to wearing masks has compromised our ability to communicate for everyone and especially those with hearing loss.

You may be asking yourself, *"How do I stay safe and hear better?"*

- Anyone with an untreated hearing loss should consider treatment options. This process begins with a hearing test to identify type and degree of loss. The audiologist will discuss available options based on the results of your hearing test, lifestyle, and goals for better hearing.
- For those who use hearing aids and are still struggling to hear, an appointment should be made with your audiologist to address your concerns and develop a plan. Many times, an additional "mask program" can be added as a simple solution.
- Using an accessory, such as a remote microphone, can be useful to bridge the loss of volume created by social distancing. Accessories can be a discrete option and easy to use. Your audiologist is happy to discuss the best solution for you.



COVID-19 AND HEARING LOSS

There has recently been an influx in news stories discussing hearing loss, dizziness, and tinnitus as a possible side effect of having COVID-19. The early evidence is suggestive of a possible correlation between these symptoms and the COVID-19 virus. It is important to understand that data is limited, and additional studies will need to be completed to more accurately determine if there is a link to COVID-19 and these symptoms.

What does this mean? It is important to recognize that any sudden change in hearing, tinnitus, or balance is a medical concern that should be promptly addressed by an otolaryngologist and audiologist, whether it is COVID related or not. The otolaryngologist will perform a thorough exam and the audiologist will complete a hearing test to evaluate the auditory system. Treatment options will be provided based on your diagnosis. It is important to understand that there are many potential causes to these symptoms that are unrelated to COVID-19. The best solution is to seek the medical opinion of an expert. Remember rapid changes in hearing, tinnitus, and balance are medical emergencies that should be evaluated without delay, regardless of COVID-19 status.

