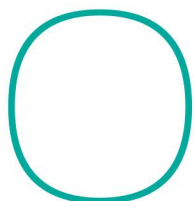


HEALTH AUDIOLOGY & COGNITIVE SKILLS

BY MELISSA KORN



OUR EARS are precious. They help us stay in touch with friends and family, enjoy music, warn us of danger and allow us to participate in life.

There are 11 million people in the UK with hearing loss — that is around one in six people. Although these numbers are significant, people wait on average 10 years before seeking help and only 40 per cent of people who need hearing aids actually wear them*.

WHY DO PEOPLE HAVE AN ANNUAL EYE TEST BUT NO REGULAR HEARING TEST?

People don't seem to think about their hearing in the same way. When I meet people in the clinic they often say that they have been "making do", rather than taking action and having a test.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF A HEARING LOSS?

Simple day-to-day activities can be a good indicator of hearing problems. Turning up the TV volume. Finding it difficult to follow conversation when there is background noise, or simply asking friends and family members to repeat themselves. A person may even begin to feel isolated and unable to contribute in social situations. One in 10 people with a hearing loss has difficulties in background noise, such as in restaurants, or at family gatherings*.

WHY IS HEARING LOSS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS?

A hearing loss may not affect all sounds in the same way. Age-related hearing loss often affects only higher-pitch consonant sounds in speech, like S or T, which means it is the clarity of speech that is affected, not necessarily the volume. Many patients say they know people are talking but that they seem to be mumbling.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A HEARING CHECK?

Identifying a hearing loss early and taking steps to correct it is beneficial, not just for the social aspects, but to allow us to stay engaged in conversations with those around us. If we ignore a hearing problem*, the hearing mechanism suffers from lack of stimulation (rather like an underused muscle that wastes away). Keeping your ears stimulated with sound helps to maintain a healthy hearing pathway to the brain.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

An audiological assessment will quickly identify any issues, and we'll advise you on the best solution, from wax removal to state-of-the-art hearing technology. Helping my patients to hear to the best of their ability is the best part of being an audiologist.

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**Source: Action on Hearing Loss*

Hearing tests: why we should turn up the frequency



Melissa Korn (right) explains a hearing issue to a client