

HEAR THE TICKING OF THE CLOCK AS TIME GOES BY

Yes, it is that time of the year again ... The time when Christmas decorations appear in shopping centres and the excitement of the upcoming December Holiday becomes tangible. The time for big family get-togethers and dinner parties, a time of connection and joy.

Something we often take for granted but that plays a very important role during this time is our ability to hear. Have you perhaps noticed how your grandmother no longer makes chirpy comments during dinner time, or how grandfather has become quiet and no longer participates in the conversation? The first signs of a hearing loss is often identified by the people closest to us, sometimes even before we notice that there might be a problem ourselves.

TYPICAL SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS INCLUDE:

- Complaining that speech sounds muffled or unclear
- Difficulty having conversations in noise
- Increasing the television volume
- Asking for repetition more often
- Looking at people's faces to understand/follow what they are saying
- Noticing the absence of certain sounds (e.g. ticking clock/birds)



WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

If you notice that someone in your family struggles to hear there are certain things that you can do to help them remain part of the conversation, these include:

- Get the listener's attention before you speak & maintain eye contact during the conversation.
- Avoid noisy background situations.
- Speak slightly slower and clearly. Do not shout.
- Rephrase when you are not understood.
- Do not look away from the listener or put objects in front of your face or in your mouth while talking.
- Do not talk from a different room. The person who begins the conversation must move closer to the listener.
- In group conversation, take care to take turns while talking. The listener can only face one person at a time.



If you have noticed any of the above symptoms in someone close to you, or if you are experiencing any of these symptoms yourself, contact an Audiologist to schedule a hearing assessment.

The end of the year often signifies a time of reflection. A time when we look back at the year and think about the things that we have achieved, the things we could perhaps have done better and the things we are thankful for. It is also that time of year where we set new goals and resolutions for the coming year. Very often these goals are related to our physical well-being, to exercise more, to eat healthier etc. but what about our mental health. Did you know that hearing is a mental process? Our ears collect sound, but our brain is responsible for interpreting and understanding it.

Hearing loss can therefore directly impact one's mental health. Some of the consequences of an untreated hearing loss include:

- **Increased mental load:** hearing loss often affects the clarity of speech making it more difficult for the person with the hearing loss to understand and follow a conversation. The harder a person must concentrate on hearing what was said, the less mental capacity is left to remember what was said therefore directly affecting the individual's recall ability. In addition, the increased mental load can result in cognitive fatigue and increased irritation toward the end of the day.
- **Social isolation and depression:** People who have a hearing loss often tend to withdraw from certain social activities as they find it difficult to follow the conversation and do not wish to ask for repetition all the time. This can easily lead to social isolation. We need social connection and stimulation, a reason to get up every morning. As soon as people give up certain hobbies or become less socially active, they are at risk of developing depression.



- **Dementia and Alzheimer's risk:** Recent research has shown that if an individual has a family history of Dementia and/or Alzheimer's disease and they have an untreated hearing loss, they are more likely to demonstrate the signs and/or symptoms earlier than an individual with normal hearing. A person with hearing loss using hearing aids has the same risk of mental decline as a person with normal hearing.
- **Poor balance and fall related injuries:** Untreated hearing loss can affect an individual's balance. Research has shown that this increases risk of fall-related injuries three-fold.



BOOK A HEARING ASSESSMENT TODAY! LET US END THIS YEAR ON A GOOD AND CLEARLY AUDIBLE NOTE.

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