

EAR & HEARING HEALTH IN CHILDREN

On the 3rd of March 2023 we celebrate World Hearing Day, an annual global advocacy event for raising public awareness regarding hearing loss and promoting ear and hearing care. This year's theme, as selected by the World Health Organization (WHO) is 'Ear and Hearing care for all'. What better way to do this than to start with our youth, the future of tomorrow. In this newsletter we are therefore addressing three common problems affecting ear and hearing health in children.



MIDDLE EAR INFECTION/OTITIS MEDIA

Ear infections are highly prevalent in young children and may be caused by a bacterial, viral or fungal infection. It typically occurs in the area behind the ear drum, including the duct known as the Eustachian tube. Approximately 3 out of 4 children may have an ear infection by the time they are three years of age.

TYPICAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MIDDLE EAR INFECTION

- Complaints of intense pain in the ear
- Fluid draining from the ear that may be foul smelling
- Difficulty hearing
- Complaints of a full/blocked ear
- Fever, irritability or nasal congestion
- Dizziness or change in balance
- Children may pull at their ears/cry more often than normal.

A WAXY ISSUE

You may find earwax a little bit gross and experience the urge to get hold of a cotton bud to clean out your child's ears. **STOP**. Earwax is actually good for their ears! Not only does it provide a layer of protection between the ear canal and the bone below, but it stops dust, bacteria and germs from entering the ear.

Earwax is totally natural and is produced in the external ear canal. As the wax builds up, any excess will make its way out on its own and it is not necessary to remove with a cotton bud.

SAY NO TO COTTON BUDS

- The skin inside the ear canal is extremely sensitive and poking around with a cotton bud can cause damage to the skin and cause infections and sores.
- By using cotton buds, you can push the earwax deeper into the ear canal and against the eardrum which can lead to ear pain or even loss of hearing.
- Excessive removal can lead to dry and itchy skin in the ear as ear wax naturally lubricates the ears.

If you suspect that your child has an ear infection or a build-up of wax please consult your doctor or ENT Specialist



CRASH !! BOOM!! BAM!! BAM!!!

In today's technologically advanced world, the popularity of headphones and earbuds has soared! This is especially true when you look at our youth. Young children play on-line games and watch shows on electronic devices using earphones or ear pods. Gamers shoot up a storm in front of a computer monitor and teens bob along to music streaming through tiny ear devices.

But did you know that listening to music or other audio through these devices at levels higher than normal can lead to early damage of hearing?



Loudness is measured in decibels (dB) and over time, any sound that is 85 decibels or higher can cause hearing loss or other hearing problems. Our normal talking voice (at arms length) is approximately 65 dB and the highest volume on headphones or ear pods average between 90 and 110 dB. Way above safe noise levels.

We have tiny little hair cells in our inner ear that helps relay sound messages to our brain. Consistent exposure to loud noise or exposure over a period of time, can damage these hair cells and, unlike other parts of the body, this damage never heals!

Many people will not be aware of a noise-induced hearing loss until it is too late and today's children are at a real risk of developing hearing related issues at a young age.

One of the symptoms commonly associated with damage to the hair cells of the cochlea is a continuous ringing or hissing sound also known as Tinnitus.



PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE!

- Turn down the volume! If the person next to you can hear any sound from the headphones or ear pods, the sound is too loud.
- Set healthy noise limits: reduce the sound on the electronic device to 60% of the maximum volume of the device - that should be a safe 60 to 70 dB.
- Limit the amount of time spent with ear pods or headphones to no more than 60 minutes at a time – take listening breaks!

If you would like to receive future Hearing Health Newsletters please like our Facebook Page and send your email address to info@reneeverson.co.za

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