About hearing

Hearing is a complex and intricate process that enables sound vibrations to pass from outside the head to the part of the brain that controls hearing. Many problems can occur in this complex process, and the world is a noisy place. Stereo headphones, TV, movies, power tools, lawnmowers, leaf blowers, portable electric hair dryers, music concerts, vacuum cleaners, motorcycles, etc. all add to the noise problem. Noise is a concern as well as the cumulative effect of noise over a lifetime because it places stress on our auditory system function. This means that many people may require additional nutritional support for their hearing acuity and function due to repeated noise exposure.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), sounds above 70 decibels (dB), particularly if the sound is prolonged, may damage our hearing. Most telephone dial tones emit 80 dB; motorcycles, snowmobiles, and similar engines range around 90 dB; factory workers are exposed to 100 dB; and a rock concert may approach 130 dB. A general rule of thumb is that if you need to shout to be heard, the sound is in the range that should become a concern for hearing function.

When the delicate mechanisms of the inner ear are assaulted by loud noises, a phenomenon called temporary threshold shift occurs. If you have ever walked away from a music concert or a construction site with a buzzing in your ears, or with everything sounding as if you are underwater, you have experienced a temporary threshold shift. While overnight quiet rest usually restores normal hearing, this can become a hearing issue, and if this type of loud noise is lengthy and/or repeated, additional stress to the hearing function will be the eventual result, and ear plugs are recommended.

Train engineers, military personnel, construction workers, hunters and musicians (especially rock musicians), may all be subjected to excessive noise. Natural Institutes of Health statistics indicate that as many as one-third of all hearing issues are associated with loud noises. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that young people account for one-third of today’s hearing statistics, and that in most cases, these hearing issues could have been prevented. Studies of populations that are not exposed to noise (like remote tribes in the Sudan and Easter Island), show that they don’t have hearing issues.

About hearing health

Most of us may take our hearing for granted. But hearing is a big concern for millions of Americans, and projections indicate that the number of people concerned about hearing issues will grow as the population ages and noise pollution continues to increase. Hearing issues have been thought of in the past as typically concerning seniors only, but more and more young people are concerned about their hearing today. Imagine hearing a ringing noise in your ears or head that sometimes doesn’t go away. This maddening noise, called Tinnitus, can range in volume from a ring to a roar. Some people hear buzzing, hissing, roaring, whistling, chirping or clicking instead of ringing.

Most people today will experience some type of incessant ear noise at some time in their life. You might notice this after being exposed to loud music or harsh noises. The noise exposure may be over, but the ringing persists. In America alone, as many as 50 million people today say their ears ring. Even in young people, exposure to loud noise is probably the leading cause of hearing loss or damage. With the influx of personal MP3 players, loud video games, and the increased use of ear phones/buds, noise damage and hearing loss is on the rise.

Over the years a number of natural remedies have been formulated to help with ear noise. NaturalCare® has developed a comprehensive Healthy Hearing Guide. This unique, beneficial program includes life style suggestions, a hearing exercise regime, suggested dietary choices to help support optimal hearing function, drugs to avoid, and additional tips for healthy hearing.

What causes Tinnitus?

Imagine hearing a ringing noise in your ears or head that sometimes doesn’t go away. This maddening noise, called tinnitus, can range in volume from a ring to a roar. Exposure to loud noises is by far the most likely culprit for tinnitus. Up to 90% of all people who seek treatment for tinnitus also have some level of hearing loss, usually noise-induced, whether they know it or not. Other causes include stress and high blood pressure, aging, ototoxic (harmful to hearing) drugs (e.g. aspirin, certain antibiotics, antidepressants, and antihistamines), ear or sinus infections, jaw, neck and cranial bone misalignment, obstruction from ear wax, thyroid disorders, and head and neck trauma.
For many years hearing aids have been the primary means of supporting your hearing function. This is really good news for millions of people. However, there are things you can do to make sure your condition doesn’t get any worse.

Drugs which may affect hearing

There are a number of commonly used drugs that are known to be a potential concern for contributing stress to our hearing function. Included in the list are:

- Antibiotics (especially the aminoglycosides)
- Anesthetics (Lidocaine, Novocain)
- Anti-malarials (Quinine)
- Cardiac (heart) medications
- Chemotherapeutic (cancer) agents
- Diuretics
- Glucocorticosteroids (cortisone, steroids)
- Miscellaneous substances (alcohol, caffeine, lead, marijuana, nicotine, mercury)
- Mucosal protectant (stomach ulcer)
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (aspirin, ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Nuprin)
- Methyl salicylates (Bengay)
- Anaprox (Aleve)
- Psychopharmacologic (mood altering) agents
- Vapors and solvents (gasoline)

The impact of aging and diet on hearing

Most doctors tell us that hearing issues increase as we get older. But John A. McDougall, M.D., presents evidence to the contrary in his book, "The McDougall Program for a Healthy Heart."

When scientists compared the hearing of the African tribes people called Maabans with people in Wisconsin, they could not find any of the Africans, at any age, with hearing concerns like those common in Wisconsin, the dairy capital of the United States. When scientists studied the Finnish people, who eat a high-fat diet, with Yugoslavs, who had a much lower cholesterol level, they found Finnish children with hearing challenges at the age of 10. By the age of 19, those young Finns had a marked inability to hear high frequency sounds. Yugoslav children had no such hearing concerns.

Dr. McDougall points out that, just as the arteries nourishing the heart and brain become clogged with fat, the vessels supplying the inner ear may also become clogged, causing hearing function concerns.

Supporting your hearing function

For many years hearing aids have been the primary means of amplifying sound and reducing the background noise to promote clarity and audibility. Recently scientists have begun to research nutritional ingredients and formulas that may support optimal auditory function, and help maintain hearing acuity and clarity.

The latest research studies suggest that we can:

- Support optimal hearing and hearing cell function
- Provide specific nutrients for the auditory system
- Promote circulation to the auditory system
- Sharpen auditory sensitivity and promote cochlear ear function
- Protect hearing cells from free-radical damage and maintain longevity

Life style suggestions for better hearing health

Nothing replaces a positive, healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise, daily meditations or walks in nature and a healthy diet. The rapid pace of our lives often interferes with us taking the time to really take care of ourselves. Caring for ourselves helps to keep our bodies healthy, and maximizes the mind/body’s inherent healing potential.

Diet and nutrition choices

Good nutrition is essential. Eat a diet that is low in saturated animal fat and refined carbohydrates and include plenty of cold water fish (i.e. salmon, trout, albacore tuna, herring, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, etc.), whole grains, seeds, nuts, and fresh vegetables and fruits. Eat foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish, canola oil, soybeans, flaxseed, walnuts, and wheat germ.

Omega-3’s are essential fatty acids that our bodies cannot create without first obtaining them from food. The benefits of omega-3 fatty acids have been touted for years with documented research. Vitamins A and E also support optimal hearing function. Foods that contain vitamin A and E include liver, fish liver oils, eggs, carrots, nuts, wheat germ and dark-green leafy vegetables.

Make sure that your diet contains plenty of fiber to prevent occasional constipation and keep the bowels clean. Drink 8 glasses of purified water per day. Ears are nourished by the body’s blood supply. Fatty foods can change the blood supply to the ears. In some countries where people eat a vegetarian diet, the people were found to have better hearing even when they were quite old.

Researchers believe hearing is adversely affected by poor eating habits and noisy surroundings. In some cases, hearing may be improved by reducing salt, which can cause fluids to be retained in the ear. Avoid dairy products, which some alternative practitioners believe create excess mucus in the body, especially in children.
**Some nutrients may support healthy hearing**

- Acetyl L-carnitine is an important nutritional ingredient related to B vitamins.
- Vinpocetine is a powerful herbal extract from Periwinkle (used in Europe for decades) that protects against free-radical damage.
- Methylcobalamin is the natural, coenzyme form of Vitamin B-12 that aids in cell formation and cellular health.
- Coenzyme Q10 is a powerful antioxidant similar to vitamin E that may protect against free-radical damage.
- Alpha Lipoic acid is a powerful and important antioxidant that protects against free-radical damage and supports nerve system function.
- N-Acetyl cysteine is an amino acid that may support overall hearing health.
- Ginkgo biloba is a well known herb that may help promote blood flow into the auditory system, and help maintain balance.
- Butchers Broom is another herb with unique benefits that may help support circulation to the auditory system.

**Specific exercises for healthy hearing**

The following simple daily exercises help tremendously to support optimal hearing function. Change your daily routine to allow time to do these and other exercises consistently for a total of 20 minutes each day. In addition to the described exercises, maintain a healthy weight and get regular moderate exercise. Walking, swimming, and bicycling all promote good circulation.

**Exercises Ideas**

1. Turn your head to the right as far as is comfortable. Repeat 8-10 times on both right and left side.

2. Looking straight ahead, bend your head straight sideways attempting to touch your ear to your shoulder without raising your shoulder. Repeat both sides 8-10 times.

3. Looking straight ahead, shrug your shoulders as far up as you can to the count of three. Relax and repeat 10 times.

4. Put your hands on your shoulders. Raise your elbows up as far as you can. Move down and back around in a circle. Repeat 5-10 times.

5. Sit in a firm chair and take a full deep breath; exhale slowly and bring elbows to shoulder height at your sides. Beginning with your chin, slowly rotate your torso completely to one side. Repeat 8-10 times on both right and left side.

6. Standing, hold your hands out to your side. Cross them in front of you in a scissor motion, first crossing the right hand over the left, then the left over the right. Repeat moving your arms up and down. Repeat 8-10 times.

7. Stretch your neck forward, touching your chin almost to your chest. Then stretch your neck backward in a pain free range of motion. Do this slowly. Do not jerk. Repeat 5-10 times.

8. With your fingers clasped behind your head (not your neck), gently curl your head down toward your chest. Try to raise your head up as your arms pull down. Do not bounce. Omit this exercise in acute neck injuries or if it causes pain. Repeat 5-10 times.

**Additional tips**

What else can you do to promote your hearing function? If you have healthy ears now, you can do things to keep it that way. Here are some additional tips:

- Avoid very loud and dangerous noise. Do not listen to loud music for long periods. Evaluate your noise pollution and determine if you should be using earplugs or other types of protection if you are exposed to noise levels that may be harmful to your ears, especially if you are a construction worker, an airport worker, a hunter, or if you are regularly exposed to loud noise at home (e.g. like lawn mowers, leaf blowers, or even hair dryers) or at work. Be aware of risks connected with recreation such as shooting a gun, driving snowmobiles, attending concerts, or other similar activities.
- Be on the alert for possible hearing problems with your children. Educate your children about the danger of loud recreational noise.
- Keep your ears clean. If your ears frequently tend to get severely blocked with wax, clean them periodically with hydrogen peroxide.
- Be sure to report any sudden hearing loss to your doctor immediately.
- Concentration and relaxation exercises can help to control muscle groups and circulation throughout the body. The increased relaxation and circulation achieved by these exercises can reduce the intensity of Tinnitus in some people.
- Exercise regularly to promote good blood circulation to the ear as the blood not only carries nutrients that help the ear heal, but also carries toxins away from the ear.
- Avoid using caffeine, alcohol, cola, tobacco, and aspirin.
• Decrease your intake of salt.
• Get adequate rest and avoid fatigue.
• Get your blood pressure checked. If it is high, get help to control it.
• If your ringing noises started during or after traveling in an airplane, try pinching your nostrils and blowing through your nose gently. Chewing gum may help prevent the popping and ringing sounds in the ear when you do fly. Also, it is prudent to avoid flying when you have an upper respiratory tract or ear infection.
• Give your circulatory system a boost with extra garlic, ginger, and hawthorn — herbs that may aid blood flow.

Hydrotherapy may be helpful for some people. Place a warm-water compress on your ear for 10 minutes, followed by a cold compress for one minute. This helps bring blood and nutrients to your ear and carry away toxins.

There are so many things you can do to help you live a fuller, more active life. Learn all you can about hearing. And don’t quit working at improving your hearing health until you achieve the desired results. You don’t have to miss out anymore.

References

About Us
NaturalCare® Products opened its doors in 1993 in Orem, Utah. Our goal has always been to provide safe, effective natural products using traditional remedies. We manufacture products we use personally and give to our friends and families. Using homeopathic formulas that conform to the U.S. Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia, and nutritional supplement products supported by a wealth of information, we have formulated products that will have a positive impact on our customers’ lives and health.

Most of our products are symptom specific. We also make available online Educational Guides that give additional information about health concerns, and other complementary and alternative methods for dealing with certain physical or emotional symptoms. Our Educational Guides help to enlighten and educate consumers about other important aspects of their lives that can improve overall health and well being.

NaturalCare® strives to be on the cutting edge when it comes to new product development.

Helping you take the very best care — that’s NaturalCare®.