“Honey, Turn Down the TV!”
A Consumer’s Holistic Guide
to Living with Hearing Loss

Northern Virginia Resource Center
for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons
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703-352-9055 * www.nvrc.org

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Certified Hearing Loss Support Specialist
• **Mission**: Empowering deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families through education, advocacy and community involvement.

• **Services**: Information and referral, outreach, education, and advocacy for deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and DeafBlind residents in Northern Virginia.

• Visit [www.nvrc.org](http://www.nvrc.org) to learn more about us.
Device Demonstration Room

(More about that next week!)
Areas Served…
Part One – Today’s Program

• **Hearing loss Review**
  – Causes, types and degrees
  – Presbycusis and Tinnitus

• **Hearing evaluation**
  – What to expect
  – Interpreting an audiogram

• **Hearing aids**
  – Styles and types
  – Fittings, adjustments and caring for them
Hearing Loss: a Review
How do we Hear?
Types of Hearing Loss

**Conductive:** wax, fluid, etc., often temporary.

**Sensorineural:** hair cell loss, nerve damage. Permanent.

**Combination** conductive and sensorineural.
Marital...
Some Causes of Hearing Loss

- Age
- Noise exposure
- Injury
- Medications
- Genetics
- Noise-induced hearing loss
- Head trauma
- Infections
Hearing Loss in Older Adults: Some Statistics

- One out of three over the age of 65
- Two out of three over the age of 75
- Hearing loss is the third most prevalent and treatable condition in seniors after arthritis and hypertension
- Left untreated, it can contribute to increased risk of balance problems, falling, depression, and cognitive impairment
Presbycusis: Age-related Hearing Loss

- The cochlea is filled with thousands of tiny little hair cell receptors
- Receptors are programmed to respond to all of life’s frequencies
- The hair cells closest to the entrance to the cochlea respond to *high frequency sounds*
- As we age the entrance to the cochlea gets bombarded with sounds and worn down first, so *high frequencies are often lost*
What about Tinnitus?

- The perception of sound when no external sound is present
  - Chirrrrrrrprus!
  - Buzzzitus or Hummmitus!
  - Scrrrrrrrrreeeeeeeeeeeeechitus!
  - Whwhwhooooooosshshshshshshutus!
Tinnitus Management

Avoid
- Salt
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Stress/Fatigue
- Noise
- Certain Meds

Distract
- Focus on other sounds:
  - CDs of nature sounds
  - Soft music
  - Pleasant sounds

Retrain
- Professional counseling
- Retraining therapy
- Clinical treatments
www.ata.org

American Tinnitus Association
Recognizing hearing loss
Hearing Loss: What’s it Like?

Hearing, but *not understanding*
Where Have our Consonants Gone?
Those darn Ts and Ds

Time

Dime
And those C/Ks and Gs

Coat

Goat
What about SH/CH?

Tee-shirt

Teacher
Forget it for the $F_s$ and $V_s$!
And just for fun…

Intense

In tents
What’s the First Step?

See your doctor!

- Primary care
- Otolaryngologist (Ear, Nose & Throat)

- An audiologist or hearing instrument specialist will ask you to sign a waiver if you haven’t had a physical within the past 6 months
As of '07, requires Au.D., clinical doctorate

8 years of university education and supervised experience

Certification by American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) or American Board of Audiology (ABA)

Can provide diagnostic services, such as newborn infant screenings, dizziness and balance testing, and programming for cochlear implants

Can provide aural rehabilitation
Hearing Instrument Specialist

- Can apprentice with an established practice
- Can take courses as needed
- Must take National Competency Exam
- Expertise in the fitting of hearing aids
- Look for the National Board for Certification in Hearing Instrument Sciences logo
Take Someone With You!

- A study by Gallaudet University showed that when patients left the audiologist’s office, they had forgotten 50% of what they were told.

- By the time they got home, they had forgotten almost all of it!

- Having a note-taker with you will help recall information later on.
What Happens During a Hearing Evaluation?
1. A consultation
2. A look through an otoscope

Any wax?

Any fluid behind eardrum?
3. Listening in a soundproof booth

- Pure tones
- Words
4. Bone conduction test

Conductive or sensorineural?
5. Tympanometry

Measures flexibility of eardrum
6. Interpretation of Audiogram
Degrees of Hearing Loss

- **Mild**
  - Some speech sounds confusing

- **Moderate**
  - Difficulty understanding loud speech

- **Severe**
  - Needs amplified speech

- **Profound**
  - Has difficulty understanding amplified speech
Hearing Aids: Styles, Types and Realistic Expectations
Styles of Hearing Aids

Behind the Ear – Open Fit

Behind the Ear – BTE -

In The Ear – ITE -

Completely In the Canal – CIC -

In The Canal – ITC -
Fitting the Earmold

- Unless you are getting a BTE Open Fit, an impression will need to be made of your ear so that the mold or the hearing aid shell will fit, be comfortable, and not whistle or feed back.

- Silicone is injected into the ear with a cookie-press type of device, and the impression is sent to the lab.
Types and Costs of Hearing Aids

Conventional Analog

- Amplifies sounds as you hear them making them louder, not necessarily clearer
- Professional can adjust the volume to your comfort level with tiny screwdriver setting
- Slowly being phased out
- *Typical cost $700 - $1,100 per aid*
Types and Costs of Hearing Aids

Programmable Analog

- Sound amplified through analog circuit
- Greater control over adjustments to match your hearing loss via digital manipulation
- Amplification can be changed for different settings, such as a noisy restaurant or the telephone
- Average cost $1,000 - $2,000 per aid
Types and Costs of Hearing Aids

Digital

- Computer chip inside the hearing aid
- Results can be sharper, clearer speech sounds
- Greatest control over adjustments to separation of speech from undesirable noise
- Reprogramming can be done in professional's office
- Up to 5 programs possible in newer hearing aids
- Costs typically range from $1,100 - $3,500 per aid
The Telecoil and Bluetooth

**The telecoil**
- Interacts with electromagnet field
- Useful on phone and with listening systems/devices

**Bluetooth**
- Provides wireless connection with cell phone, TV
- (Image courtesy of Phonak)
Loop systems

NVRC’s meeting room is equipped with induction loop for listeners who have telecoils in their hearing aids and cochlear implants. (More about loops next week!)
What’s the Best One?

Our hearing losses are all unique

There is no such thing as a “best” hearing aid

What works for me might not work for you

You might have to try more than one manufacturer’s brand
The Goal:

An improved quality of life
How do Hearing Aids Help?

- Sound amplification
- Help us get back into the conversation
- Help with location of sounds
- Help with balance
- Help with the natural, stereo effect of sound
But…They Have Limitations

Hearing loss may be compounded by problems with:

- The speaker
- The listener
- The environment
- The message

2 + 2 = 5
We Need Realistic Expectations

• Hearing aids do not provide the same result for our hearing that glasses provide for our vision
Fittings and Adjustments

• **A hearing aid should fit!**
  – It should be comfortable
  – It should not whistle or torture people with feedback
  – Feedback can mean the hearing aid is not inserted correctly or that it does not fit properly

• **You will return for “tweaks” and adjustments** not only during the trial period but also if/when you have any changes in your hearing.
  – Digital hearing aids can usually be adjusted in the audiologist’s office
Sample Brands of Hearing Aids

- Bernafon
  - www.bernafon-us.com

- Oticon
  - www.oticon.usa.com

- Phonak
  - www.phonak.com

- ReSound
  - www.gnresound.com

- Rexton
  - www.rexton.com

- Siemens
  - www.hearing.siemens.com

- Sonic Innovations
  - www.sonici.us.com

- Starkey
  - www.starkey.com

- Unitron
  - www.unitron.com

- Widex
  - www.widex.com
What About the Invisible Lyric?

- Placed deep inside ear canal, 4mm from eardrum
- Microphone is 4mm+ from opening of ear canal
- Battery lasts 120 days
- Sold on subscription basis
- Subscription includes all replacement Lyric hearing aids

www.lyrichearing.com

An audiologist must be certified to fit patients with Lyric
What About Mail Order?

Advantages:

• Cheap
• No hearing evaluation required

Disadvantages:

• No hearing evaluation required
• Not made for your ear canal
• Not programmed for your hearing loss
Hearing Aids: Insurance Coverage

- **Medicare** *might* cover hearing evaluation if referred by primary care, but they do not cover hearing aids.

- **Medicaid** does *not* cover hearing aids.

- **Tricare, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna** and some others have plans that cover hearing aids either in whole or in part.

- Check with your insurance company.
Beware and Be Wise When you Buy!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You have 30 days to try</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Tweaks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 30-day trial in Virginia</td>
<td>• What are the return fees?</td>
<td>• Return for adjustments as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Return them if not satisfied</td>
<td>• Vary from flat fee to a percentage</td>
<td>• Ask for another brand if not happy</td>
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Caring for Your Hearing Aids

- Keep them dry!
- Clean them daily with a soft cloth or alcohol wipe from your hearing professional
- Remove wax build-up using small loop tool
- Store them in a dehumidifier overnight
- Keep them away from children and pets!
What about Batteries?

The larger the battery, the longer the shelf life.
What determines a good or frustrating outcome?

- How long have you had it?
- Your understanding of it
- Your expectations of the aids
- Degree & severity of the loss
- Audie’s programming expertise
If you Have a Complaint

Better Business Bureau
1411 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20005
202-393-8000 (V)
202-393-1198 (Fax)
http://www.dc.bbb.org
info@dc.bbb.org

VA Dept. of Professional and Occupational Regulation
9960 Maryland Dr. #400
Richmond, VA 23233
804-367-8500 (V)
804-367-2475 (Fax)
http://www.dpor.va.gov
HearingAidSpec@dpor.virginia.gov
Next Week.....Part Two

- Technology
- Strategies
- Resources
For a Copy of this PowerPoint

boleary@nvrc.org
Questions?

Please take a moment to fill in our evaluation form if you do not plan to attend the next session.

“Honey, I can’t hear you!”

Thank you

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