

Hearing Associates
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Providing excellent customer service & quality hearing aids to our patients since 1987. Hearing Associates, P.C. is your hearing healthcare expert in Mason City, Northern Iowa, and Albert Lea, Minnesota.



Hear in the Now Announcements



Katelin Wins Pumpkin-Carving Contest

At Hearing Associates, we're all for good competition. To celebrate the pinnacle of the fall season, we hosted a staff pumpkin carving contest. And results are in!

It was a close race, but the clear winner was Katelin's "Pumpkinstein," with 77 votes. Congratulations, and thank you to everyone who voted and made this fun!

Employees had until October 24 to carve their pumpkins and take a picture of them. From October 25 through 28, our Facebook followers voted for their favorite pumpkin carving by liking the corresponding picture on our page.

Each "like" equated to \$1 donated to the winter clothing drive at Jack Frost's Closet. The charity got more than 400 votes, so we think they're the real winners. Hearing Associates is rounding up the total to donate \$500, which should help the charity buy lots of coats in time for winter.

We thank our Facebook followers and staff for their participation and donations. Happy Halloween!



There's a New Face at Hearing Associates!



We want to welcome our new Front Office Professional, Corrine Anderson, to the Hearing Associates family. Corrine has 38 years of customer service and administrative experience. She's also worked in the healthcare industry for nearly 20 years.

Personalized customer service is a top priority for Corrine, and she strives to treat every patient like a close family member. She will be based out of our Albert Lea office in Minnesota.

Corrine's family includes her husband, Todd, son, Todd-Curtis, and daughter, Taryon. She's a huge movie buff and enjoys a variety of music. She's also committed to supporting her community and co-chairs two non-profit organizations in Freeborn County: Jack Frost Closet and Memory Café.

Make sure to say hello when you stop into our Albert Lea office and give Corrine a warm welcome!

Hearing Associates Earns Two Awards

The team is incredibly excited to announce that we've been awarded two honors by the Albert Lea Tribune and the Globe Gazette. We're thankful to our staff and patients who nominated and voted for us. We couldn't do what we do without the support of our team and community!



2021 Northern Iowa Employers of Choice

Our dedication to providing Northern Iowa and Southern Minnesota with the best audiology services is only possible because of our incredible staff. Dr. Trembath believes in investing in the happiness of the Hearing Associates family and is extremely grateful for the respect and teamwork that's shared among our group.

A member of our team described Hearing Associates as "a home, a community and a place that...inspires me," and that's exactly what we hope to be for every staff member.

From the friendly smiles that greet you at the door to the comprehensive evaluations conducted by our audiologists, we rely on each person to do their part in providing top-rated audiology services.

Without a happy staff, we wouldn't have happy patients.



Reader's Choice 2021 Award for Best Hearing Center

Not only are we recognized by our staff, but by our community as well. Globe Gazette readers awarded us the honor of Best Hearing Center for the Audiology/ Ear & Hearing category.

Dr. Trembath said the advances in hearing aid technology have allowed our team of hearing specialists to provide a unique approach to treating all kinds of hearing loss. We're also dedicated to providing more than hearing screenings and devices.

"We can work with patients on communication strategies as well as work with their significant others who are impacted by their hearing loss to try and alleviate communication breakdowns," Dr. Trembath said.

We hope to continue serving our patients in Northern Iowa and Southern Minnesota to the best of our abilities. Hearing Associates also plans to continue to improve hearing treatment opportunities and acquire more technology to address your unique needs.

Thank you for your support!

Get Your Hearing Ready for the Hoildays

Summer is fading, and fall is settling in, but that doesn't mean your ears are slowing down. Now is the time to get your hearing tested and your hearing aids serviced, so you're ready for the bustle of the holidays.

Our satellite offices have limited availability, and our providers will be taking well-deserved respites, so schedule your appointment now.

Virtual Holiday Parties

If you join a holiday party remotely this year, test-drive video chats like FaceTime, Zoom, or Google Hangout before the party. Ask our audiologists about hearing aids with Bluetooth connectivity. You may be able to stream audio right to your hearing aids for easier conversations.

Before the Party

Put a little work in before you head to a holiday gathering to ensure maximum enjoyment. Clean your hearing aids and check that wiring and tubing are operational. Recharge or exchange hearing aid batteries or pack extra batteries to take with you to the event.

Adjust your hearing aid to different listening environments to determine the best setting for a holiday gathering. Ask your host about turning down the volume on music or TVs.

At a Gathering

You're at the party, so now it's time to find the right spot to chat. Avoid the kitchen and dining room before dinner. Clanging dishes, running water and moving chairs create excess noise. Find a quiet room to have one-on-one conversations. A room with couches and curtains is better for listening since the fabric absorbs echoes.

Ask a family member to help guide you through conversations if you're struggling. Don't be afraid to ask others to repeat themselves and give visual cues – like cupping your ear – to indicate that they need to speak louder.

In a Restaurant

Restaurant noise is unavoidable but using assistive listening devices eases the strain on your ears. FM systems reduce background noise so you can focus on voices, and table mics pick up multiple speakers at your table.

Sit in the middle of the table if you want to stay engaged in different conversations. Get a person's attention before speaking to them so you can read lips and visual cues. Ask others to do the same for you, so you don't miss their questions.

Are Nightmare Noises Affecting Your Hearing?

As the weather cools down, you may want to sleep with the windows open and enjoy the fresh fall breeze as you drift off to sleep. However, your body still responds to sounds even if you're not consciously listening. That means the rustling leaves, crickets and traffic sounds can negatively affect your hearing health.

How Noise Disrupts Sleep Patterns

Hearing a noise while you're sleeping triggers stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. It's part of the evolutionary physiology that our ancestors used to survive. And while that may have been necessary for people who feared nighttime predators, it can be problematic for today's average sleeper.

There are four stages of sleep: stage 1 and 2 are light sleep; stage 3 is deep slow-wave sleep when your muscles relax and your breathing slows; stage 4 involves rapid-eye-movement (REM) and dreaming. Studies show noise pollution lengthens stages 1 and 2 and decreases stage 4, affecting deep sleep and rejuvenation.

Noise doesn't have to reach an excessive volume to be disruptive, either. A sound as low as 40 decibels, like the hum of your refrigerator, can elicit enough brain activity to disrupt your sleep pattern.

A Lack of Sleep Exacerbates Hearing Loss

While you're "listening" to nighttime noises, your brain is trying to interpret the sounds and expending energy when it's supposed to be resting. That can leave you feeling more tired when you wake than when you went to sleep.

Poor sleep causes mental exhaustion and inhibits your ability to focus. So, your brain is working extra hard to interpret sounds with less energy.

Lack of sleep also affects your heart health, circulation and blood vessels, all of which are closely linked to your hearing. Your ears rely on blood vessels to support cilia, the hair cells responsible for sending electrical signals to your brain. Those blood vessels can't function without proper circulation, which causes permanent damage to the cilia.

Tips for Getting a Good Night's Sleep

- Turn off electronics that emit a hum or buzz or remove them from your bedroom.
- Shut your door to muffle sounds while you're sleeping.
- Wear earplugs or hearing protection to block out nighttime noises, specially if your partner snores.
- Try a white noise machine. It can reduce the impact of environmental sounds and help you fall and stay asleep.



Does Hearing Loss Increase My Risk of Dementia?

Many people don't realize the far-reaching health implications of untreated hearing loss. Research shows that people with moderate to severe hearing loss are five times more likely to develop dementia than people with normal hearing.

Even individuals with mild hearing loss are nearly twice as likely to experience cognitive decline and dementia than those without a hearing impairment. And the risks are three-fold for people with moderate hearing loss.

The Research Behind the Connection

A 2014 study at Johns Hopkins University tracked brain changes in 126 people over a decade. Each participant completed a hearing test, and the results revealed 75 people with normal hearing and 51 people with impaired hearing who had at least a 25-decibel loss.

The results indicated:

- Participants who were hearing-impaired at the start of the study had accelerated rates of brain tissue loss.
- Those with impaired hearing lost more than one additional cubic centimeter of brain tissue each year compared to participants with normal hearing.
- The impaired hearing group also had significantly more shrinkage in brain regions responsible for processing sound and speech.

What's the Connection?

Hearing loss can lead to increased cognitive load as the brain works harder to understand speech. Over time, that extra effort drains the brain of the mental energy it needs for other important functions, such as thinking and remembering. That deficit lays the groundwork for the development of Alzheimer's or dementia.

A 2021 Korean study indicated that individuals over 66 with bilateral hearing loss showed poorer cognitive function than those with unilateral hearing loss. That means if you have hearing loss in both ears, your risk of developing dementia is even greater.

The Emotional Effects of Hearing Loss

There's also a socialization component associated with untreated hearing loss. If you can't communicate effectively with others, you may begin to withdraw from relationships, leaving you feeling isolated, anxious and depressed.

Fortunately, research also shows that treating hearing loss with hearing aids can slow cognitive decline and help prevent dementia. By improving listening experiences, hearing aids can also improve an individual's social capabilities, independence, emotional health and overall quality of life.

Early intervention is essential to treating hearing loss effectively. Protecting your ears protects your brain from memory loss.

