

Hearing Associates  
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### Inside this issue

How Hearing Loss Affects Learning in Children

How Ototoxic Monitoring Protects Your Hearing

What is Airplane Ear?

Troubleshooting Hearing Aid Bluetooth Connectivity

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 News**

Spring 2022



## Hear in the Now Announcements

### Celebrating Hearing Through Song

Hearing Associates and Una Vocis Choral Ensemble have come together to present Hear Me, a concert featuring works around the theme of sound, voice and silence. The program will include A Silence Haunts Me by Jake Runestad and Ted Boss, who used words from a letter Beethoven wrote to his brothers to voice the fear, frustration and grief that accompanied his 20-year descent into deafness.

Hear Me celebrates sound and singing and reminds us not to take hearing for granted. The concert will take place on May 7, at 7 p.m. in Holy Family Catholic Church in Mason City. Advance adult tickets are available for \$12 at [www.unavocis.org](http://www.unavocis.org). Tickets may also be purchased at the door for \$15.



### Tanner Graduated from LNI



Congratulations to Tanner, our patient care coordinator, on graduating from the 2022 Leadership North Iowa training program! This unique training provided Tanner with the chance to build professional connections and partnerships with businesses in Northern Iowa.

Tanner has always pursued new ways to help people manage their healthcare and hearing loss, so he jumped at the chance to add leadership skills to his repertoire. He loves getting to know our patients and plans to use his knowledge from LNI to further his cause of improving the quality of life for those with hearing loss.

### May is Better Hearing Month!

May is all about raising awareness for hearing health and communication disorders. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) designates a new theme each year, and for May 2022, it's "Connecting People."

**There are also weekly themes associated with Better Hearing Month:**

- Week 1** is all about connecting in schools.
- Week 2** highlights inpatients settings.
- Week 3** promotes communication in outpatient settings.
- Week 4** centers on the home and workplace.

You can participate in Better Hearing Month by advocating for your own hearing health. Schedule your appointment at Hearing Associates today!

### Hearing Associates Supports #OperationGratitude

In honor of Earth Day, our staff wanted to take the afternoon on April 22 to do a community cleanup. Unfortunately, we were rained out.

Instead, we contacted the KCMR radio station to help them with #OperationGratitude. The project supports essential workers such as police, firefighters, and emergency medical staff. This time, the event was dedicated to helping the nurses at Mason City Clinic.

We assembled items including gift cards, deodorant, toothpaste, bottled water, floss, toothbrushes, chocolates and lip balm and donated them to all the nurses to say thank you.

The Hearing Associates team is extremely grateful for the essential workers in our city and around the United States. This world wouldn't go round without all of you!





# How Hearing Loss Affects Learning in Children

Untreated hearing loss can have long-term effects on your child's development. So, it's important to seek treatment as soon as you realize there may be a problem to give your child the best chance at developing their speech, language and socialization skills.

## Signs of Childhood Hearing Loss

**Newborn to 9 months:** Your child isn't startled by loud sounds and doesn't turn their head toward a sound source. They don't respond to your voice and don't babble.

**9 to 15 months:** Your baby still doesn't babble and struggles to repeat simple sounds. They don't use their voice to get your attention.

**15 to 24 months:** Your child struggles to use simple words and can't identify common objects, colors or body parts. They don't express interest in songs, stories or rhymes.

## Language and Speech Skills

Listening to spoken words is the basis of your child's speech and language skills, and they learn by mimicking others. But if your child has hearing loss, they'll miss that essential auditory stimulation.

**Listening helps children learn components of speech and language, including:**

- Differentiating vowel and consonant sounds
- Vocabulary
- Sentence structure
- Words with multiple meanings

## Socialization

Learning to interact with others teaches children how to communicate effectively and express themselves. If your child has hearing loss, they may exhibit behavioral issues, like temper tantrums, loss of interest in activities and withdrawal from interacting or playing with other kids.

Hearing allows children to understand and empathize with others based on their emotional responses. And socialization is an important part of teamwork and negotiation, which are skills your child will need in adulthood.

## Hearing Devices for Infants and Children

**Hearing aids:** Infants as young as four weeks can wear hearing aids. Your baby should get hearing aids by the time they're six months old if they have confirmed hearing loss. It's essential to expose your child to sound stimuli as soon as possible to support healthy brain function and language development skills.

**Cochlear implants:** These devices are for children with severe to profound hearing loss who have not had success with hearing aids. Cochlear implants have an external component that sits over the ear and an internal mechanism surgically implanted beneath the skin that bypasses the damaged inner ear and sends sound signals directly to your child's auditory nerve.

# How Ototoxic Monitoring Protects Your Hearing

Effectively managing your exposure to ototoxic medications and treatments will lower your risk of hearing loss, tinnitus and balance issues. Ototoxic management provides standard monitoring protocols to treat hearing loss.

## What is Ototoxicity?

If a medication or treatment is ototoxic, it can damage your ear and nerve supply. Ototoxic drugs and chemicals affect your hearing and spatial awareness. You may experience single- or double-sided ototoxicity.

**Signs of ototoxic damage include:**

- Tinnitus, a ringing or buzzing in the ears
- Trouble hearing speech in noisy environments
- Vertigo or dizziness
- Loss of balance
- Frequent falls
- Motion sickness

## Common Ototoxic Medications

There are more than 200 ototoxic medications.

**Here are some common prescription and over-the-counter drugs that cause hearing loss:**

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like aspirin,
- ibuprofen and naproxen
- Water pills
- Diuretics
- Anti-anxiety medication
- Quinine-based medication
- Certain chemotherapy and cancer treatment drugs
- Antibiotics used to treat bacterial infections such as gentamicin, amikacin and tobramycin
- Some anticonvulsant drugs
- Medication used to treat high blood pressure



## What is Ototoxic Monitoring?

It's a type of healthcare management for people who have been exposed to ototoxicants and show signs of hearing loss, tinnitus and imbalance. It's important to consult your doctor or specialist to verify if your treatment may cause hearing loss.

Ototoxic management allows audiologists to coordinate with other doctors and specialists to mitigate the source of the ototoxic exposure.

**Effective management includes:**

**Drug review:** Your audiologist will require a complete list of your medications and their dosages. To assess your risk, they will also need to know if you're receiving chemical treatment, such as chemotherapy.

**Hearing evaluation:** It's best to get a baseline hearing test before you begin treatment so your audiologist can understand the effects of your ototoxic treatment. The audiologist will examine your ear and review your audiogram to determine if you have hearing loss.

**Treatment:** The audiologist will make recommendations based on your needs and healthcare requirements. That may include a reduction in dosage or a change in medication. If you can't eliminate the ototoxic treatment, you may require tinnitus management, hearing aids or another type of sound therapy.

**Monitoring:** Successfully managing ototoxic exposure requires regular follow-up appointments so your audiologist can monitor your hearing health.



# What is Airplane Ear?

Also known as ear barotrauma, airplane ear is common among airline passengers. It can occur during an airplane's ascent or descent.

## What Causes Airplane Ear?

The air pressure in and outside your ear is roughly the same. A slow change in air pressure allows your ears time to adjust, but a rapid change can cause discomfort.

Your eardrum swells when the pressure in the inner ear is higher than that of the outside environment. That causes the eardrum to stretch. If your inner ear is less pressurized than the outside air, your eardrum will suck in like a vacuum.

Ear pressure is regulated by your Eustachian tube, which compresses with air pressure changes, inhibiting its ability to equalize the pressure in your ears.

## H2: Airplane Ear Symptoms

Common signs of airplane ear include ear pressure or "fullness," mild ear pain and temporary hearing impairment. Severe symptoms include intense or prolonged ear pain, dizziness, vomiting and bleeding from the ear.

In very rare instances, airplane ear can cause your eardrums to rupture. If that happens, seek immediate medical treatment to avoid infection, which may cause permanent damage and hearing loss.

## How Do I Treat Airplane Ear?

**Chew gum, swallow or yawn:** Those actions stimulate air movement through your Eustachian tube. Infants may nurse on a bottle or pacifier, and children can suck on a lollipop or candy to stimulate swallowing.

**Valsalva maneuver:** Fill your mouth with air, close your lips and pinch your nostrils shut. Gently force the air out of your mouth until you feel your ears pop. That technique is not recommended if you're sick or have allergies.

**Toynbee maneuver:** Close your mouth and pinch your nostrils shut. Swallow several times while you keep your airways sealed. The movement of your throat muscles will force your Eustachian tube open and ease the pressure.

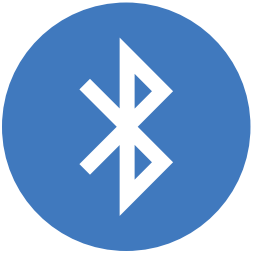
**Earplugs:** Specially designed airplane earplugs have filters to regulate inner ear pressure during flights.

## Is it Preventable?

Airplane ear isn't preventable, but you can take steps to reduce the severity of your symptoms and discomfort. Flight anxiety and illness can contribute to the sensation of hearing loss, so you may consider alternate travel methods.

Nasal sprays and decongestant medication can regulate ear pressure and should be taken an hour before landing.

# Troubleshooting Hearing Aid Bluetooth Connectivity



Here are some tips to help you get your Bluetooth hearing aids connected and operating correctly.

## Pairing Hearing Aids to Your Device

Here's a step-by-step guide for iOS and Android devices.

**iOS:**

1. Open the battery compartment or put your hearing aids on the charger for five to 10 seconds if they're rechargeable.
2. Open the Settings app, select the Bluetooth option and switch the slider on.
3. In Settings, select the Accessibility tab and scroll to Hearing Devices. Turn on the Hearing Aid Compatibility slider.
4. Select your hearing aids under the "MFi Hearing Devices" section.

**Android:**

1. Open the battery compartment or put your devices on the charger for a few seconds if they're rechargeable.
2. Tap the blue gear icon on the home screen to open your Settings.
3. Scroll to the Connected Devices section and select "Pair new device."
4. Select your hearing aids on the list of available devices. If you have two hearing aids, you will need to connect one at a time.

## Trouble Connecting to an App

Most hearing aid manufacturers have apps that allow you to adjust your settings. You'll need to be near your smart device when pairing your hearing.

**Here are some steps to take if you're struggling to connect:**

- Turn off your hearing aids and the paired device for a few seconds. Turn them on again and try to reconnect.
- Check your app settings to ensure you have the most recent version.
- Unpair and re-pair your hearing aids to your device. You can also delete or "forget" a Bluetooth connection on your phone or tablet and disconnect from a specific app.

## Audio Will Only Stream in One Ear

One of your hearing aids may disconnect from your smart device if you've moved out of its wireless range. Reboot it by turning the hearing aid off for a few seconds, then switching it back on. You can also disconnect and reconnect to the Bluetooth device.

## Bluetooth Interference or Feedback

Standing too close to a Wi-Fi router or other internet connection affects your hearing aid's Bluetooth connection to smart devices. Low batteries also cause wireless connections to fade.

Move away from possible sources of interference, and be sure you have a fresh set of batteries or a complete charge before you try to re-pair your hearing aids.