

Hearing Associates
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We want to let you know that we have moved our Albert Lea clinic location to a brand-new space inside the John and Susan Morrison Medical Plaza (next to MercyOne).

We plan to provide the same great services you're accustomed to (and a few new ones), it will also give us the ability to see patients on days and times that are more convenient for you. Even better, it will eliminate the need for taking the stairs or an elevator. Our hours are 8:00am-5:00pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. In the future, we hope to add more days as schedules and manpower allow.

Construction is going on so our east entrance won't be ready until October or November. In the meantime, we ask that you enter the Northbridge Mall between Dunham Sports and Plaza Morena. If you're seeing us in conjunction with an ENT appointment at MercyOne, please use the MercyOne Main Entrance. Both of these entrances are on the west side of the building. We look forward to seeing you in our new office.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to call our office at (641) 494-5180. We are happy to help assist you with any questions you may have.

Our new Albert Lea address is:

**2440 Bridge Avenue
Suite 200
Albert Lea, MN 56007
641-494-5180**

Summer 2021

Hear in the Now News

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.



Aural Rehabilitation Classes are Back!

After a long hiatus, the team at Hearing Associates is excited to announce that our “Your Hearing Journey” aural rehabilitation classes will resume. These classes are designed to support you and your loved ones as you improve your communication with hearing loss. Classes meet once a week for a three-week session.

What is Aural Rehabilitation?

It’s a combination of different types of therapy designed to help you live well with hearing issues. These informative classes help you make the best use of your hearing aids while exploring assistive listening devices and communication strategies.

Advantages of Aural Rehabilitation

Some of the benefits of attending Your Hearing Journey classes include:

- Interacting with a network of people who share similar hearing and life experiences
- The opportunity to ask questions you might not have had at your appointment

- Learning about appropriate expectations for amplification devices
- Implementing effective communication strategies
- Learning about environmental obstacles and overcoming them
- Developing strategies to protect your hearing
- Information about audiological exams, hearing aid cleaning and other hearing healthcare services

Maximize Your Journey to Better Hearing

Aural rehabilitation classes aren’t just for the person with hearing loss. It’s also an excellent opportunity to get your loved ones involved in your journey to better hearing. They will learn about effective communication, obstacles and strategies that will help you address your unique goals.

We encourage patients and their families to learn ways to overcome challenges together, enhance their hearing world and maintain healthy communication.

Bringing a support partner to class allows your loved one to:

- Be on the lookout for additional details you may have missed
- Learn effective techniques to carry on more effortless conversations
- Encourage you as you work toward improving your hearing loss

A Parent’s Guide to Childhood Hearing Loss

It’s time for back-to-school preparations, which means you may need to schedule a hearing evaluation for your child.

Causes of Hearing Loss in Children

According to the Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC), about three million children in the United States have lost some of their hearing. Exposure to loud noises damages the hair cells in your child’s ears that send auditory signals to the brain. And cilia cannot be repaired once they’re damaged.

Here are some causes of childhood hearing loss:

- Head or neck injuries
- Frequent ear infections
- Tumors or deformities in the ear
- Earwax build-up
- Genetic factors
- Birth defects
- Influenza, chickenpox, measles, meningitis and mumps
- Ototoxic medications

Prevention

Most childhood hearing loss is preventable. Teaching your child safe listening techniques will help them learn the importance of hearing safety. **Here are some tips to help you protect your child’s hearing:**

- Have regular discussions about the importance of healthy hearing.
- Remind your child to turn down the volume on the TV.
- Have your child take breaks from listening to music or watching TV.
- Limit her use of earbuds and headphones.
- Use decibel-tracking apps to monitor his noise exposure.
- Place tape over speakers on toys to muffle the volume.
- Remove batteries from noisy toys.

Seeking Treatment

Leaving your child’s hearing loss untreated puts him at risk for developing speech, language, and socializing issues. We can administer comprehensive tests to identify your child’s type and degree of hearing loss and prescribe treatment options, including medication, hearing aids or surgery.

SYMPTOMS OF HEARING LOSS

In an infant:

- Doesn’t turn toward sound sources after six months
- Not startled by sudden sounds
- Can’t say single words like “mama” or “dada” by 12 months
- Doesn’t respond when called by name

In a child:

- Can’t hear sounds at a particular frequency or volume
- Needs to stand close to a sound source to hear
- Turns the TV volume up to excessive levels
- Frequently asks you to repeat yourself
- Delayed or unclear speech

Older children and teens

- Angles “good” ear toward a sound source
- Inattentiveness
- Speaks louder than usual
- Complains of blocked ears
- Poor behavior or grades in school

Handling a Tinnitus Spike

Have you noticed that the ringing in your ears worsens every so often? It may feel random and completely out of your control, and that can be very frustrating. So, what’s going on, and how do you manage your tinnitus symptoms during a spike?

What is a Tinnitus Spike?

A spike is defined as an increase in the volume, pitch or intensity of the ringing in your ears. It may also be identified as a change in the perceived sound. For example, you may notice that the ringing sounds more like buzzing or whooshing during a tinnitus spike.

What Causes It?

Many things can lead to a spike. Anything that engages the fight or flight response in your sympathetic nervous system will likely affect your tinnitus.

The most common things that trigger tinnitus spikes are stress and lack of sleep.

Internal factors:

- A diet high in sodium or sugar
- An increase in alcohol or nicotine consumption
- Food sensitivities
- Vitamins and supplements
- Anxiety or depression
- Recreational drug use
- Dehydration

External factors:

- A change in the weather or barometric pressure
- Pollution
- Exposure to loud noise
- Exposure to trigger noises (*not necessarily loud*)

How Do I Cope with a Tinnitus Spike?

One of the most important steps in effectively managing your tinnitus is to track your daily symptoms. Keeping a log of your condition will help you identify possible triggers during a spike.

It may be difficult to determine the cause in the heat of the moment, so being proactive in tracking your symptoms can help you define and manage triggers.

It’s also important to learn to differentiate the things you can and can’t control. For instance, you can’t control the volume of the ringing in your ears or how long an episode will last.

Here are some things you can control to help you cope with a tinnitus spike:

- **Sleep habits:** Go to bed and wake up at a consistent time.

- **Relaxation:** Meditation, reading and journaling are good ways to focus your mind during a spike in your symptoms.

- **Therapy:** Discussing the emotional effects of your condition can ease the emotional burden. Therapists can also recommend coping strategies to ease discomfort.

- **Hearing aids:** Some hearing aids have tinnitus masking programs designed to cover the ringing in your ears with soothing sounds.

Managing Hearing Loss in the Workplace

If you’re returning to your workplace after working from home during the pandemic, you may notice your hearing loss affects your ability to do your job. A good communication strategy will help you mitigate the effects.

Challenges for People with Hearing Loss

Communication problems are among the most daunting obstacles you may face if you have hearing loss. Your coworkers may not know how to communicate with you effectively. That can lead to misinterpretations, frustration and mistakes.

Your ears might contend with background chatter, as well as printers, fax machines, phones, alarm systems and other noisy machinery. And trying to differentiate voices in a group conversation or conference can be a nightmare.

While the pandemic highlighted the importance of remote conferencing technology, it also presented new challenges to workers with hearing loss. Video chats make lipreading more difficult, which can negatively affect speech comprehension. So, you may find that returning to an in-person environment reduces the job-related complications associated with hearing loss.

ADA Accommodations for Hearing Loss

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, your employer is legally obligated to provide accommodations for your hearing loss. It’s important to know which type of assistance you’re entitled to, so you can make the most of your work environment.

ADA-required assistance may include:

- Closed captioning or transcripts on web-based video and audio
- Access to captioned telephones or mobile captioning apps
- Video, email or text messaging, as an alternate form of communication
- Sign language interpreters for conferences and meetings

- Assistive listening devices
- Emergency systems with strobing lights and loud alerts

Improving Your Productivity

Here are some tips for managing your hearing loss at work:

- Ask your coworkers to get your attention before speaking to you and to talk slowly and clearly.
- Face the speaker and use facial cues and body language to discern meaning.
- Situate your desk, office, cubicle or workspace away from noisy areas and equipment.
- Ask your employer if their video-conferencing application has closed captioning.
- Ask for agendas before meetings.
- Identify which listening environments are challenging and talk with your employer about providing accommodations.
- Optimize your remaining hearing with hearing aids. Audiologists can adjust hearing device settings to address your needs at work.
- If you have hearing aids, ask your audiologist about directional mics, hearing loops and Bluetooth connectivity.

