

HEARING ASSOCIATES
250 Crescent Drive, Suite 100
Mason City, IA 50401



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COVID-19 Update

Your health is a top priority for the team at Hearing Associates. We continue to take extra steps to ensure your well-being while attending to your hearing needs. We follow all cleaning/antiviral procedures set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a daily practice.

As an added precaution, we're also implementing the following safety measures:

1. We will attempt to schedule appointments to ensure there are as few patients in our offices as possible.
2. We've roped off every other chair in the waiting rooms to facilitate social distancing.
3. Face masks are required to enter the facility and must be worn at all times.
4. We ask patients who had a fever in the past two weeks to contact the office and reschedule your appointment.
5. Only two chaperones may accompany a patient to their appointment.

Curbside Hearing Service

We're continuing our drive-through service option at our Mason City clinic. This service is available Monday through Friday, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. You'll have access to top-rated hearing aid services from the comfort of your vehicle. Stay toasty warm during cold winter weather, and let one of our friendly team members come to you.

Call 641-494-5180 when you pull in, and someone will come out to collect your devices. Your cooperation significantly improves our effort to limit the number of people in our waiting room.

We Want to Hear from You!

We rely on honest input from patients just like you! Whether you want to share a quality experience or tell us what we need to improve, please let us know how we're doing by leaving us an online review.



Telehealth Options Available

During this unique season, Hearing Associates can assist patients in office, curbside and from the comfort of their own homes. Our remote services include:

- Remote Programming
- Telehealth Appointments
- Phone Consultations

Call our offices and ask us about these digital and remote services.



Call (800) 621-6424 or visit
HearingAssociatesMC.com



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

Winter 2021

Wintertime Can Affect Isolation

Colder temperatures and slippery conditions may mean you spend more time inside and away from others during the winter months. Prolonged isolation can cause loneliness, and hearing loss may exacerbate its toxic side effects.

The Link Between Isolation and Hearing Loss

Having a conversation is not always easy if you have hearing loss. Asking others to repeat what they said or reminding them to speak up is frustrating. You may find yourself withdrawing from social situations altogether.

However, socialization is just as essential to your well-being as a healthy diet and exercise. Human interactions help release feel-good hormones like dopamine and serotonin that boost your

mood. Socializing also keeps your brain active, which can reduce the impact of your hearing loss.

How Winter Can Make It Worse

Winter is a great time to cozy up in your house, but it's also the time of year when we receive less sunlight. Limited daylight hours and increased cloud cover reduce the amount of Vitamin D you receive from the sun's rays. Studies have shown that people with lower levels of Vitamin D are at a greater risk for depression.

Wintertime can also impact people with Seasonal Affective Disorder, a type of depression related to the change of seasons. When you add hearing loss to the equation, your tendency to isolate yourself is likely to increase.

Combatting Loneliness

Hearing aids: Wearing your hearing devices gives your ears the best chance at catching all the essential sounds throughout your day. That may include the doorbell, a phone call or a conversation with your loved one.

Phone calls and video chats: Schedule time to call or video chat with friends and family at the beginning of the week. Talking with someone each day gives you time to catch up and socialize from a safe distance.

Socialize safely: If you're someone who still wants face-to-face interaction, find safe ways to socialize one-on-one. Take a walk with a friend once a week or invite them over for a cup of coffee. Switch up your routine and visit your loved ones so you don't isolate yourself in your house.

Cold Weather Hearing Aid Care

Knowing how winter affects your hearing aids can help you prevent costly damage.

How Cold Weather Affects Your Hearing Aids

Moisture: Condensation forms on your hearing aids when you come into a warm environment from the cold. The external components may be durable, but the internal electronics are susceptible to moisture. It can damage wiring and cause your hearing aids to stop working.

Batteries: Moisture corrodes the batteries in your hearing aids. Colder temperatures also decrease the voltage of disposable batteries, causing them to die quicker than usual.

Earwax: The waxy substance in your ears protects your ear canal, and cold weather increases the amount your ears produce.

Lower temperatures also cause your earwax to harden. Earwax buildup may make it necessary to clean your hearing aids more frequently.

Protecting Your Devices from the Cold

You can take easy precautions to protect your hearing aids from precipitation, sweat and chilly weather.

Check the forecast before you venture outside. Keep an umbrella at home and in your car, so you're never without protection from precipitation. Wide-brimmed hats and hooded raincoats will also provide adequate cover for your hearing aids.

If you like to stay active outside during winter, wear a headband or hearing aid sleeve to absorb perspiration. Wipe off your hearing aids right away if they're exposed to any moisture.

A Nightly Routine Can Prevent Moisture Damage

It's a good habit to clean your hearing aids regularly. It's even more important to clean them when they're exposed to condensation and precipitation. Moisture-damaged hearing aids may produce static or cut in and out. Here's what you should do:

1. Turn off your hearing aids and remove the batteries.
2. Wipe all components with a clean, dry towel or cloth. Make sure you clean the battery connections if there's corrosion.
3. Use a hearing aid drying kit or puffer to get rid of moisture inside your devices. You can also put them in some rice to draw out any water.
4. Leave the battery compartment door open for one or two days to allow all moisture to evaporate.
5. Insert new batteries. Contact your audiologist if your hearing aids continue to malfunction.

Frosty Weather can Affect Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a perceived ringing, buzzing or clicking in your ears. It is not a disease but a symptom of another condition. And when it gets cold outside, you may notice your symptoms occur more often.

Why is My Tinnitus Worse in the Winter?

Colder weather: When the temperature drops, your ears are likely to produce more earwax as a protective response. The blockage in your ear canal limits the number of sounds you hear and makes the ringing seem louder.

Illness: You're more likely to catch a cold or the flu during winter. Congestion, ear infections and sinus pressure can exacerbate tinnitus.

Lack of exercise: Colder weather might keep you in the house more often in winter. Not getting enough exercise increases your blood pressure, which also affects tinnitus.

Caffeine: The days are shorter in winter, so you may reach for an extra cup of coffee to get you up and moving in the morning. Tinnitus and caffeine don't mix, so you may notice more ringing when you drink coffee or energy drinks.

Managing Tinnitus

Eat a balanced diet: Giving your body the nutrients it needs will keep you healthy and happy and reduce the effects of tinnitus. Managing your sodium, sugar and caffeine intake will ease your symptoms.

Exercise: Whether you go for a short walk or climb the stairs at home, there are plenty of ways to get moving in winter. Cardio improves blood flow to your ears and supports the hair cells that convert sound to audio signals for your brain.

Hearing aids: You're less likely to notice the ringing in your ears if you're concentrating on other sounds. Hearing aids allow you to hear ambient noises and conversations that may distract you from the ringing.

Masking devices: These machines produce gentle, neutral sounds that cover tinnitus symptoms. Some hearing aids also come with masking programs.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy: Meeting with a counselor will help you learn to manage your emotional reaction to your tinnitus. Learning to accept your symptoms can improve your overall quality of life.

Alex Crippin Completes the "Make It OK" Ambassador Program

Director of Operations Alex Crippin completed the Healthiest State Initiative "Make it OK" Ambassador program in January. As an ambassador, he will advocate for ending the stigma surrounding mental health, share pertinent resources, check-in with employees, and make presentations to groups as requested.

Now, more than ever before, people are feeling increased anxiety, stress, or loneliness due to social distancing requirements. The "Make It OK" program promotes a general understanding of mental health illnesses and emphasizes "it's OK" to seek assistance.

Visit MakeItOK.org/Iowa to learn more about ending mental illness stigma and accessing free mental health resources.



Make It OK.org

Valentine's Day Annual Event

The holidays may look a little different this year, but we were still able to host our annual Valentine's Day giveaway. Guests who visited our offices received a single stem rose as a token of our continued appreciation during these difficult times.

