

Hearing Associates
250 South Crescent Drive, Suite 100
Mason City, IA 50401



Inside this issue

What Are Hearing Aid Telecoils and Hearing Loops?

What's the Difference Between Hearing and Listening?

Hearing Better in Challenging Listening Environments

The Stigma Surrounding Hearing Aids is Changing



**Hear in the
Now News**

April 2024

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



**Hear in the Now
Announcements**

Hearing Associates April 2024 Newsletter

Greetings from Hearing Associates!

We're back with more tips and insight on various hearing and ear health topics, including custom earmolds for swimming and tinnitus treatment.

In this edition of our quarterly newsletter, we discuss:

- How hearing loops and hearing aid telecoils work
- The difference between hearing and listening
- How to hear better in challenging listening environments
- How the stigma surrounding hearing aids is changing

Corinne Named Volunteer of the Year



Congratulations to our front office professional, Corinne Anderson, for earning the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce.

Corinne has served as a co-chair for Jack Frost Closet, which provides winter outerwear for families in need, and Memory Café, a nonprofit that supports individuals with Alzheimer's.

We're proud of her commitment to our community and look forward to supporting her in her future endeavors.

Giving back is part of our "Hear for Our Community" initiative, and during November and December, Hearing Associates donated a portion of hearing device sales to homeless shelters in Northern Iowa. We're thrilled to share that we donated \$4,035 to be divided amongst the Homeless Shelters of North Iowa, Northern Lights Alliance for the Homeless and The Beacon.

Celebrating Work Anniversaries

Rachael Dolezal, Audiologist

Rachael celebrated her 15th year at Hearing Associates! She's provided the Mason City, Osage, Cresco and Britt communities with her expertise and care, and she continues to provide personalized hearing solutions. Her bright personality has made a lasting impression on her patients, who adore her for her kindness and knowledge.



Nichole, Front Office Professional

For three years, Nichole has greeted our Mason City patients with a smile and friendly support. She's an expert at providing patients with assistance and supplying them with the information they require to feel comfortable with their hearing health plan.



Thank you both for your years of hard work!



We are proud to donate a portion of every hearing aid purchased this month to the North Iowa Children's Museum

What Are Hearing Aid Telecoils and Hearing Loops?

Telecoil technology and hearing loops are beneficial if you wear hearing aids or are considering getting them.



What is a Hearing Aid Telecoil?

Telecoils or T-coils are small copper coils inside hearing aids that are activated with the touch of a button. They receive electromagnetic signals from public sound systems and modern phones equipped with hearing aid-compatible technology.

When coupled with a hearing loop, telecoils in hearing aids can improve your listening experience in public spaces by transmitting sound directly to your hearing devices.

Do I Need Hearing Aids With a T-Coil?

You may benefit from wearing hearing aids with a telecoil if you have severe or profound hearing loss. Age-related hearing loss can affect your ability to hear in public places such as theaters, airports, restaurants, arenas and centers of worship. Telecoils can help you engage with your soundscape and understand speech sounds.

How Can I Get the Telecoil Enabled in My Hearing Aids?

Consult your audiologist to determine if telecoil hearing aids are right for you. Your audiologist will implement the necessary programming, or they can recommend a hearing aid upgrade to accommodate telecoils.

What are Hearing Loops?

They're public assistive listening systems that transmit electromagnetic signals to telecoil-enabled hearing devices and cochlear implants. They're designed to eliminate background noise to improve sound clarity and listener comprehension.

Audio is captured by the audio system and converted into an electromagnetic signal that's transmitted through a wire loop in a venue. That signal is received by compatible hearing devices and changes it back to audio.

Where Are Hearing Loops Used?

Facilities such as courthouses and theaters must provide assistive listening systems. Hearing loops continue to rise in popularity and are becoming more common in newly constructed or remodeled venues, including airports, churches, libraries and healthcare facilities.

You can find hearing loop systems by conducting an online search on Google or Loopfinder.com. You can also find a list of local venues with hearing loops in our blog article. Public spaces should also have signage to indicate if a hearing loop is available. You can also install a hearing loop at home with the support of an installation expert.

What's the Difference Between Hearing and Listening?

The terms are often used interchangeably, but they involve different physiological and mental processes.

What is Hearing?

It's the involuntary physiological process of perceiving sound. You hear sounds all day, though you may be unaware of them because your ears and brain never stop analyzing audio.

Your ears funnel sounds into your inner ear whether you're paying attention or not. For example, your brain still registers the traffic noise outside your house even if you're focused on your TV.

What is Listening?

Listening is the intentional act of understanding sounds and speech. It also utilizes other senses, like sight, to give context to what you hear.

There are two types of listening:

- 1. Active listening:** This two-way communication requires awareness to interact with others. You internalize what you hear to create an emotional connection.
- 2. Passive listening:** This one-way communication involves less personal interaction. You're not actively contributing to an exchange and have your emotional response established.

How Hearing Loss Affects Mental Health

Hearing is essential for communication and socializing. It's common to experience social withdrawal if you have untreated hearing loss. You may face relationship strain because you struggle to keep up with conversations or avoid socializing completely. That could increase your risk of isolation and depression.

Your brain also has to work harder to interpret sound stimuli. That can lead to listening fatigue and leave you feeling tired after being in a noisy environment.

Tips to Improve Listening Skills

- Face the person you're speaking with, so your ears catch as much sound as possible.
- Use non-verbal cues like facial expressions and gestures to aid understanding.
- Don't interrupt or start forming a response until the other person is done speaking.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage more interactive exchanges.
- Stay focused on the speaker in front of you and disregard distractions.
- Don't shy away from asking someone to clarify, rephrase or repeat what they said.

Your audiologist may recommend aural rehabilitation to help you adjust to living with hearing loss and improve your communication skills. Aural rehab includes classes designed to help you understand how hearing works and adjust to hearing aids.

How Audiologists Can Help

Hearing Better in Challenging Listening Environments

You may experience listening fatigue in noisy environments even if you have excellent hearing. And those environments can be especially frustrating if you have hearing loss. Poor acoustics, excessive background noise and significant distance from a speaker can impact your hearing and comprehension.

Acoustics

Acoustics is how sounds travel through space. Bare rooms with hard surfaces cause sounds to bounce and create echoes. Soft materials absorb sound and make spaces more acoustically favorable. You can improve acoustics in your home by adding carpeting, curtains and furniture to prevent sounds from echoing in a room.

Distance

Getting as close as possible to a speaker can boost communication. Try to stay within an arm's length of the person you're talking with to facilitate hearing and visual cues like lip-reading, body language and gestures. Ask others to get your attention before starting a conversation so you can get closer.

Background Noise

Reducing background noise is important in managing challenging listening environments. Sitting in places with less foot traffic or using a tabletop mic to pick up conversations can help you minimize background noise so you can focus on the sounds you want to hear.

Dealing with Challenging Listening Environments

Selecting venues with better acoustics and strategic seating can provide you with a better listening experience. Find out the event itinerary to help navigate potentially noisy environments.

Understanding and addressing environmental factors can improve the listening experience and minimize frustration.



The Stigma Surrounding Hearing Aids is Changing

Some people worry about the stigma associated with wearing hearing aids despite the continued growth and advances in modern hearing technology. That may be due to outdated perceptions about how hearing devices look. However, that stigma is changing as more people learn about how hearing devices can improve their quality of life.

The Presence of Hearing Loss

You may not want hearing aids because of the stigma that it's a sign of aging. But hearing loss affects people of all ages. About 35% of American adults 65 and older have hearing loss, but approximately 15% of adults 18 and older report some trouble hearing as well.

Two to three of every 1,000 children in the U.S. are born with a detectable degree of hearing loss. The ever-growing use of headphones and earbuds also raises the likelihood of children altering their hearing.

Advances in Hearing Aid Technology

Another common misconception about hearing aids is they only amplify sound volume. Today's hearing aids do more by acting as miniature computers that filter, process and clarify audio.

You can buy hearing aids with customizable programming to suit your unique hearing needs. Some styles have settings that automatically adjust to new surroundings, so you don't have to press buttons. Directional microphones reduce background noise and make it easier to hear conversations.

Bluetooth hearing aids connect wirelessly to compatible smartphones, tablets, televisions and computers, allowing you to stream calls, music and audio into your devices.

Discreet Designs

Gone are the days of clunky, beige hearing aids. You can choose from various hearing aid styles and colors, including some that are nearly invisible to the naked eye. Behind-the-ear (BTE) and receiver-in-the-canal (RIC) hearing aids come in slimmer designs and different skin tones that make them more discreet. In-the-canal (ITC) devices sit flush against the shell of your ear, and completely-in-canal (CIC) hearing aids fit snugly in your ear canal.

Environmental Accommodations

Better education about hearing loss has contributed to the availability of assistive listening devices and accommodations in businesses and public spaces. Most hearing aids are equipped with a telecoil that can connect to hearing loops in public buildings to improve your listening experience. You can find hearing loops in movie theatres, concert halls, auditoriums, performance spaces and places of worship.

Your employer is obligated to provide you with the environment and tools you need to succeed, regardless of your hearing ability. That may include closed captions on video conferences or written materials to help you follow along during a presentation.