

## Community Calendar - local events

### Donating Hearing Aids

We are often asked what our patients should do with an old set of hearing aid that is no longer needed for backup. The Lions Club accepts donations of all behind the ear and in the ear hearing aids.

Send the aids to:  
District 4 - L4 Hearing Aid Bank  
c/o Lion Keith Campbell  
8121 Ridgefield Drive  
Huntington Beach, CA 92646

Be sure to include your name and address so he can send you a receipt to use for tax purposes.

#### Battery Sale Returns:

The Valley Audiology battery sale is returning for the holidays! For the week of December 6th - 10th you can buy two packages for the price of one. The limit is 10 packages of batteries in total and you must come into the office to purchase them. We will post more information about the battery sale in our offices in November.

#### Hearing Loss Association of America(HLAA):

HLAA is a networking and support group for adults with hearing loss. Our local chapter holds monthly meetings on the first Wednesday of the month at

7:00pm at the Walnut Creek United Methodist Church. For questions, call 925-264-1199.

#### Listening and Spoken Language Developmental Playgroup:

The Center for Early Intervention on Deafness(CEID) is creating a new class for hearing impaired children and their families who are choosing communication based on spoken language. The class is for kids ages 12 - 30 months and it will be held on Wednesdays from 3:00 - 5:00 at the CEID office in Berkeley. For more information, call CEID at 510-848-4800 or TTY 510-848-5658.

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VALLEY AUDIOLOGY

# NEWS

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### FEATURE ARTICLE:

## OCTOBER IS NATIONAL PROTECT YOUR HEARING MONTH

### Valley AUDIOLOGY

Exposure to loud noise is one of the most common reasons for people to have hearing loss and it is nearly 100% preventable! In our country, approximately 36 million people have hearing loss and one in three developed their hearing loss as a result of exposure to noise.

Noise causes hearing loss by damaging the hair cells in the inner ear. Hair cells are the sensory cells that convert the sounds we hear into electrical signals that travel up to the brain. Once the hair cells are damaged they cannot grow back. Much research is being done in the area of hair cell regeneration, but there is no fix on the horizon.

Sounds that can damage your hearing are either too loud for too long or are very loud and sudden. Noise is dangerous if:

- You have to shout over it to be heard
- The noise makes your ears ring
- You have decreased hearing or muffled hearing for several hours after exposure.

You can protect your hearing by wearing earplugs or earmuffs when you are around sounds that are more than 85dB for a long period of time (see below for a chart of dB levels), turning down the volume of potentially harmful sounds like loud music, and finally, by walking away from the loud noise or avoiding loud places altogether.

The following is a list of loudness levels for common sounds:

- 60dB – normal conversations or dishwashers
- 80dB – alarm clocks
- 90dB – hair dryers, blenders and lawnmowers
- 100dB – MP3 players at full volume
- 110dB – concerts, car racing and sporting events
- 120dB – jet planes at take off
- 130dB – ambulance and fire engine sirens
- 140dB – gunshots, fireworks and custom car stereos at full volume

Many patients remark that kids today are damaging their hearing with loud music, and that may be so, but over 30 million Americans in the workforce are exposed to potentially damaging noise on the job. Noise exposure is a concern for people of all ages.

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Hearing Protection Devices

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# VALLEY AUDIOLOGY NEWS

## LYRIC BY INSOUND

You all have received our announcement that Valley Audiology is fitting the Lyric hearing aid. There are several things that make Lyric a truly unique product.

It is the only extended wear hearing aid on the market today. The aids stay in your ear canals up to 120 days at a time. When they no longer work, you return to our office and we put a new pair in.

The internal components are covered by a soft foam and the aid sits in your ear canal 4mm from the ear drum. You can take them out if you need to but only trained professionals put them in your ears.

We have found that the people who are most satisfied with the Lyric product like the no maintenance aspect of the product and they like that it is invisible. They all feel they hear better with this product than with their old hearing aids.

Unfortunately not everyone who has come in can use Lyric. Lyric is not appropriate for swimmers, for people with small ear canals and for people with very severe hearing loss.

If you want to see if your ear canals are the right size for Lyric, make an appointment in our Concord office. Due to the space needed for the Lyric equipment, we are only fitting it in our Concord office at this time.

If you have questions about whether Lyric is appropriate for you or someone you know, please call our office.

## CERUMEN MANAGEMENT

Cerumen is the official term for ear wax. This may seem a funny topic for a newsletter, but in our office earwax management is a daily issue for our patients' ears and hearing aids.

Earwax is one of the two most common causes for hearing aid failure (moisture is the other reason). Keeping your hearing aids clear of cerumen by cleaning them nightly is imperative for optimal functioning. If you need a refresher on hearing aid maintenance, we are happy to show you.

Cleaning your ears daily is NOT recommended. You know who you are out there poised to jam that Q-tip in your ear! We often see abrasions and bleeding in the ear canal caused by Q-tip use. Or, we see earwax that has been pushed so far down your ear canal that it will take several visits and possibly a bit of pain to get it all out.

Leave the cleaning to the experts: your own body and your healthcare providers.

## Mercury Free Batteries

The batteries that you are using in your hearing aids are zinc air batteries and I was surprised to learn recently that they have about 10% mercury in them. The battery manufacturers have all agreed to produce mercury free batteries beginning in June 2011. Some manufacturers are selling mercury free options today.

We have received notice from more than one hearing aid manufacturer that the new mercury free batteries are causing some issues with their hearing aids. Specifically, the aids are giving the low battery signal when the battery is still working. This is happening most often with the size 10 battery.

If you want to use the mercury free batteries you may need to come into our office for us to deactivate the low battery signal. Then you won't be warned when the battery is running low but you also won't get the signal unnecessarily.

We will keep abreast of any news in the battery arena and update you in future newsletters.

## HEARING PROTECTION DEVICES

If you must be exposed to loud noise, wearing hearing protection in the form of earplugs or earmuffs is recommended.

The least expensive type of hearing protection is the foam plug that you can buy in the drugstore for less than \$1 a pair. Inserted properly they can attenuate noise up to 25dB or so. These are a good option for people who are able to roll up the plugs into a small diameter and who have large, straight ear canals.

For people who are unable to insert the off-the-shelf plugs or who need to wear plugs for long periods of time, custom made ear plugs might be a better solution. Custom made plugs require that we take an impression of your ears in the office. We send the impressions off to a lab and custom earmolds are made for you. You have choices of styles and colors when ordering custom plugs. Custom plugs cost \$170 for the pair.

There are some specialty styles of custom plugs for musicians and for hunters. Musician's molds have a filter to equally attenuate all frequencies so music isn't distorted. The hunting plugs allow sound to come through naturally until a loud sound triggers the closing of a valve to protect hearing. These specialty molds cost a bit more than the custom earplugs.

Finally, parents and grandparents listen up! There is a new product on the market called Kidzsafe Earbuds that are compatible with any audio device. No matter how high your child turns up the music, the earphones will keep the volume level below 85dB. The best part is that these earbuds cost only \$19.95.

If you have questions about any of these products or if you want an appointment for us to take impressions of your ears please call our office at 925-676-8101.



**Fun Fact:** In World War One parrots were kept on the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France because of their remarkable sense of hearing. When the Parrots heard the enemy aircraft coming they would warn everyone of the approaching danger long before any human ear would hear it.