

Holiday Hints

Hearing Loss And The Holidays—It's A Family Affair

(NAPS)—Since the holiday season is such a great time to connect with friends and family members you haven't seen in a while, it may also offer an opportunity many may not have considered. Now can be your chance to check in with loved ones about their health and well-being, including those who may be grappling with hearing loss.

The Problem

After all, hearing loss affects 48 million—or one in five—Americans and could become even more widespread in the future. Two reasons are the aging population and the frequent use of earbud headphones to listen to music, which can cause noise-induced hearing loss. Untreated hearing loss can lead to social isolation, stress and depression, social rejection and feelings of loneliness, irritability and anger, reduced alertness and even an increased risk of falls. This holiday season, take the opportunity to help those you care about start the New Year off on a positive note by addressing untreated hearing loss.

Untreated hearing loss not only affects a person's quality of life—it also has an impact on his or her family. While hearing loss is isolating, it's not an isolated problem. For those with loved ones experiencing untreated hearing loss, the effects are real, significant and can affect the most important relationships in their lives. Everyone who loves them and lives with them feels the effects, too.

Couples often feel the effects of untreated hearing loss the most, with spouses reporting a decrease in social activities because of the inability to have a conversation in some settings, and many say they're unable to enjoy even simple activities like watching a movie or TV together be-



When someone in the family has a hearing loss, the whole family has a hearing loss, say experts at the Hearing Loss Association of America.

cause of the disparity in comfortable volume levels.

For adult children with parents experiencing hearing loss, connecting can be a challenge. When a parent has hearing loss, he or she may avoid phone conversations and social situations, making it hard to maintain closeness. And children or grandchildren, with typically higher, softer voices, can be particularly hard to understand for someone with untreated hearing loss, which can lead to frustration or embarrassment.

What You Can Do

If you suspect that someone you love is experiencing hearing loss, it's time to take action. Here are seven tips to improve communication with a loved one experiencing hearing loss:

Seven Tips For Families to Improve Communication with Hearing Loss-Affected Loved Ones:

1. Get their attention before you start speaking. This ensures they can focus on you and what you're saying. Don't yell from another room, for instance.

2. Don't change topics without warning. If you start talking about weekend plans and then suddenly

launch into an unrelated idea, your loved one may have difficulty following the conversation.

3. Slow down and eliminate background noises. Many people talk too fast. Slow down, speak clearly and pause—it helps. Mute the TV and turn down the radio, too.

4. Double-check. If you're relaying vital information, confirm you were understood.

5. Seek help and ensure safety. If your loved one has difficulty using the telephone or cannot hear emergency warning signals, visit the Hearing Loss Association of America, www.hearingloss.org, to learn more.

6. Share the hearing responsibility. It is the responsibility of the person who is talking to make it easier to be heard and understood. It is the responsibility of the person with hearing loss to acknowledge the problem, connect with a hearing loss expert or audiologist who can help, and use technology to improve hearing now. You can learn more about today's affordable and high-tech hearing aid options at www.hihealthinnovations.com.

7. Start a conversation. Speak with your loved ones about hearing loss and treatment options. Keep the conversation positive, speak to the impact that hearing loss has on the family, and discuss the benefits that can be realized through seeking treatment. Finally, reassure them that you'll support them in taking the first step of having their hearing examined. Hearing loss doesn't have to compromise your relationships.

Learn More

For information about the signs of hearing loss, how to maintain hearing health, and treatment options, visit www.hihealthinnovations.com.