

Protecting Our Children

Is Your Child Safe When Grandpa Can't Hear?

by Sergei Kochkin, Ph.D.

(NAPSA)—When it comes to having a babysitter available, many families consider themselves lucky when a grandparent (or grandparents) lives close enough to look after the little ones—either during the day or to give the parents an occasional night off.

But do the child's grandparents provide a truly safe environment for their grandchildren?

About one in three people over 65 have some degree of hearing loss; one in six of the "baby boomer" generation have hearing loss due to growing up with loud music. Many of these people are unaware of the problem or deny they have a problem.

Hearing loss in caregivers can add up to a potential danger for children in their charge. The ability to hear is a key component in assuring a youngster's safety. The risks of not hearing a smoke or carbon monoxide detector, an intruder, or a child crying in the backyard could result in injury or worse. Plus, older children have been known to take advantage of an adult's hearing loss and get "permission" to do something the adult wouldn't agree to if he or she understood what the child said.

People with hearing loss who wear hearing aids, use assistive listening devices or employ other communication coping strategies can provide safe care for children. These people are aware of their limitations and take steps to ensure that their hearing loss will not endanger others.

The first step in assuring that grandparents or other caregivers can safely take care of your children is to ask them to get their



In caring for children, grandparents need to be able to hear such urgent sounds as crying, the telephone and a smoke alarm.

hearing checked next time they see their doctor. If the problem is more obvious, have them make an appointment with a hearing health care professional (audiologist, ear-nose-throat physician, hearing instrument specialist).

Hearing well enables babysitters to contend with and call for help when necessary during emergencies such as a fire, severe weather or a carbon monoxide alert, and in performing such everyday tasks as driving and bicycling.

Every parent wants the assurance that the person caring for his or her child, even when it's a loving grandparent, can provide a safe environment. Hearing well is an important element in child safety. With the newer modern hearing devices, there's no longer any excuse for not being able to hear well.

To receive a free copy of the booklet "Your Guide to Better Hearing," visit www.betterhearing.org or call the Better Hearing Institute hotline at (800) EAR-WELL.

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