

Keeping Your Ears Safe And Sound

(NAPSA)—While being active outdoors, even in cold weather, can be both fun and healthful, it's important to protect your body. For example, ears are particularly sensitive especially because they tend to be exposed to the elements—but there are ways you can protect them.

The Problem

Rough weather, particularly cold conditions, can present challenges. Ears cool down very quickly because they have no protective fat tissue. The nerves in the ear canal run unprotected under the skin and may react with a strong pain impulse to changing temperatures. The risk of infection in the ears increases in cold conditions, as less blood is circulated. Cold and wind can irritate the ear canal, which often causes pain, while water in the ears can cause inflammation. Also, a cold head may cause cramped muscles in the neck region, which can lead to ear problems like tinnitus.

People with hearing instruments should be aware that cold conditions can cause the battery to run out faster. In addition, condensation can occur inside the hearing instrument, causing an electronics failure.

Some Answers

Fortunately, the experts at the nonprofit Hear the World Foundation, created by Phonak, offer these ear care do's and don'ts:

- **Do** keep your ears warm by wearing a hat, headband, earmuffs or a good ski helmet.

- **Don't** put cotton wool in your ears to protect them from the wind. This can actually cause inflammation in the ear canal.

- **Do** dry your ear canal as well as possible after showering, swimming or using a sauna. With care,



Whether you use a hearing instrument or not, it's a good idea to protect your ears from damp and cold weather.

you may be able to do this with a hair dryer.

- **Don't** neglect an ear infection. See your physician or an ENT specialist. Left untreated, an infection can get worse and cause serious damage.

- **Do** stick to a healthy diet and do plenty of exercise to stimulate blood circulation to your ears.

- **Don't** use hot water to warm up cold ears. Gently massage them instead.

Tips For Hearing Instrument Users

- Always have spare batteries available. If batteries get cold, you can warm them for five minutes in your closed hand or in a pocket; do NOT use a lighter.

- Never put hearing instruments on a heater.

- Special drying containers, available from hearing care professionals, can prevent damage caused by condensation.

- Water-resistant hearing instruments are less susceptible to damage from condensation.

Learn More

For further facts and tips on ear care, go to www.Phonak.com. At that site, you can also take a free hearing test.