

Hearing Notes

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Hearing Loss & Dementia: I Don't Remember Hearing That.

"Memory loss is a large component of dementia. But it's difficult to remember anything if you didn't hear it clearly to start with."

- Kenneth Scott, MD, FACS, Midwest Ear, Nose and Throat

At some point, we've all had to lean in to hear what someone was saying, or maybe even asked someone to repeat themselves. Typically, we're in loud environments or have multiple conversations going on at

Continued on next page.

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one time. Now imagine having to do this all the time, and it's not your surroundings that are interfering.

Fotolia 900611 SChances are you'd eventually give up, or just nod.

Whether or not you look bewildered, family members and friends may question the behavior. The confusion caused by hearing loss may even prompt the ill-fated word "dementia" to enter the equation. Kenneth M. Scott, MD, FACS at Midwest Ear, Nose and Throat, is the region's only fellowship trained ear surgeon. He's seen first-hand how patients struggle with socializing due to hearing loss. "Many of them become withdrawn and can be accused of dementia or even depression," says Dr. Scott.

Thankfully, he says it doesn't take long before someone decides to look into the issue. What they'll discover is how far technology has come in helping those who suffer from hearing loss and that it may even reduce the chance of developing dementia. "There have been amazing improvements in hearing device technology over the past five years," says Dr. Scott of the smaller, more stylish models that even integrate with iPhone



technology. "In fact, some of the same people I've seen in the past have been helped a lot."

But the most important thing Dr. Scott says to understand is that hearing aids don't cure dementia, but rather provide the missing stimulation to the brain that keeps it active and functional. "In general, hearing aids can improve a patient's overall quality of life," says Dr. Scott. "They're able to hear birds chirping, everyday sounds and take part in conversations."

So how do hearing aids reduce the chance of developing dementia? Kelcey Cushman, Au.D., CCC- A is an Audiologist at Midwest Ear, Nose and Throat. Hearing aids help, she says, in that they improve speech and reduce cognitive overload, or in other words, reduce the amount of strain put on the brain by providing the necessary auditory information to the brain.

Aside from dementia and quality of life, hearing aids provide additional benefits as well. According to recent studies, older adults with hearing loss are more likely to require hospitalizations, experience depression, and have greater periods of inactivity than peers with normal hearing. Dr. Cushman adds that studies have

proven adults with mild hearing loss are three times more likely to have a history of falling. This number increases as the hearing loss is worse. She attributes this connection to a lack of environmental awareness because they can't hear what's going on around them.

In the end, both Cushman and Dr. Scott agree that getting the extra stimulation from a hearing aid helps in a multitude of ways. From hearing the little voices of a grandchild to a horn on a bus, hearing aids not only keep the mind sharp, they can also improve an individual's quality of life.

By Jennifer Dumke, Sioux Falls Woman

Take our free hearing quiz!

Go to midwestent.com and take our free quiz to see if you should come in for a hearing evaluation:

<http://midwestent.com/services/hearing/hearing-quiz>

Kelcey's Keynotes:

This month's Hearing Notes Spotlight is on Kelcey Cushman, Au.D., one of the awesome Audiologists at Midwest Ear, Nose Throat.

Kelcey lives near Sioux Falls with her husband, Adam. Kelcey and Adam have a beautiful one year old daughter named Ava, and a cat named Lady. Kelcey grew up in Cooperstown, ND, a small town about 100 miles northwest of Fargo. Her family visited Sioux Falls when she was younger and really enjoyed the area. Her husband is from Illinois, so Sioux Falls is a great half-way point for their families.

Kelcey and her family enjoy traveling, exploring, and learning about many different places. Kelcey's hobbies include shopping, spending time with family and friends, watching college and NFL football (Go Pack Go), watching movies, golfing, and being out on the water.

Kelcey's interest in hearing loss began when she was very young. Her cousin, whom she spent every day with, was born with enlarged vestibular aqueducts, which left her with moderate to severe hearing loss. She was not diagnosed until 1st grade, and it was something Kelcey had never heard of and did not know happened to kids. That event sparked her decision to learn more about hearing loss, how to treat it, and how to prevent it.

When asked what her favorite part of working with hearing patients was, Kelcey replied, "I enjoy all my patients. I love listening to their stories about their families and activities. My patients and I have a relationship which makes us feel like family. I love improving their quality of life through the gift of hearing." Kelcey is also the implant audiologist who works with cochlear implants and bone anchored hearing aids. "The initial activation of a cochlear implant is very rewarding, Watching patients hear for the first time, or after years of hearing loss, is such a blessing and I am privileged to witness it."

Come visit Kelcey at Midwest Ear, Nose & Throat in Sioux Falls!



Paul Cink, MD, FACS



Bethany Helvig, MD, FACS



Peter Kasznica, MD



Kenneth Scott, MD, FACS



Thomas Tamura, MD



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