**Healthy Habits that Decrease Your Risk of Hearing Loss**

The new year has just begun, and it is a great time to start making good decisions that will influence the success of 2020; but whether you set a New Year’s resolution or not, you’re about to receive some motivation to pursue self-improvement by me, your local audiologist \_\_\_\_\_[Au.D name]\_\_\_.

Now that January is halfway over, you have probably seen many dieting ads over the television. Participating in healthier habits is important, but these advertisements can sometimes be more daunting than inspiring. Instead of improving your weight, I’m here to show you other ways you can improve your life. I’m so excited to share my research with you.

**Walking 2 Hours Per Week Can Maintain Your Hearing**

One of my roles as an audiologist is to diagnose and treat hearing loss. Over the last \_\_\_ years, I have helped thousands of individuals with this chronic and disabling condition. Throughout these years, I have seen hearing loss to be common.

Data on risk factors for hearing loss are limited, but during my research, I came across several studies that suggest changes to one’s daily habits can reduce the onset of hearing loss. One of those studies, published by the *American Journal of Medicine*, states that people have less risk of developing hearing loss if they participate in physical activities – specifically, women who walk more than 2 hours per week.

Another interesting fact is that the exercise doesn’t have to be strenuous, and that exercise can help maintain hearing regardless of one’s age. As an audiologist, I counsel my patients regarding the common stigmas associated with hearing loss, such as aging. This data affirms that hearing loss isn’t always directly caused by age.

Before you hit play on the next Netflix series, make a commitment to go for a walk. Not only are you loving yourself enough to treat your body and mind with the exercise it needs, but you are also reducing your risk of hearing loss.

**Smoking Might be Damaging Your Hearing**

According to the *Journal of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology*, quitting or reducing smoking and avoiding passive exposure to tobacco smoke may prevent hearing loss. The study shows that passive exposure to tobacco smoke compared to non-smokers was associated with 28% elevated risk of hearing loss.

The study also notes that their data included not only an association with smoking and hearing loss but also with cardiovascular disease, showing multiple reasons to quit the habit.

Something unexpected that the study presented is that ex-smokers have a slightly reduced risk of hearing loss than non-smokers. The study suggests that their reduced risk is due to ex-smokers adopting a healthier lifestyle than non-smokers, one that affected other comorbidities that cause hearing loss (i.e. hypertension, diabetes).

If reducing or quitting smoking is one of your resolutions this year, keep up the good work! Your hard work will pay off in more ways than one.

**Protect Your Hearing This Year**

Many of us own a pair of sunglasses. Sometimes, we carry them on us or keep them in our vehicles to protect our eyes against the damaging rays of the sun, but how many of you carry hearing protection with you? Do you have a designated spot for hearing protection in your vehicle?

Many of my patients tell me that they have gone to concerts so loud that they wish they had brought hearing protection with them. I want this year to be the year that people start to take their hearing health as seriously as their vision. When used correctly, disposable hearing protection is a great way to decrease exposure to noise and reduce the risk of hearing loss.

As an audiologist, I can order you a custom pair of hearing protection that is durable and lasts for years.

This year, do yourself a favor and designate a spot for your hearing protection in your purse or vehicle.

**Closing Remarks**

This research provides insight on what may be damaging your hearing today. Luckily, the research also provides possible strategies for prevention.

Many of us are fixated on the stigmas associated with hearing loss. Many believe that hearing loss just happens naturally as you age. However, more and more research is emerging that suggests otherwise. Like I mentioned before, cardiovascular disease, cerebrovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidemia have been linked to an increased risk of hearing loss.

As an audiologist, I always recommend healthy hearing habits such as avoiding loud sounds and using hearing protection. However, research has shown me that I can also recommend healthy lifestyle habits such as walking at least 2 hours per week and reducing one’s exposure to cigarette smoke.

No matter what your goals are for the new year, plan to incorporate a healthier mindset. By carrying hearing protection with you, reducing your exposure to cigarette smoke, and/or walking with a loved one, you can greatly reduce your risk of hearing loss this year.

References:

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