

CANCER AND HEARING LOSS

February—April 2018

Cancer and Hearing loss are more closely related than you think

Some cancers and cancer treatments may cause hearing loss. The hearing loss can range from mild to severe and may include hearing sounds in the ear/s which is known as tinnitus. Hearing loss and tinnitus, which may occur separately or together, often subsides when treatment ends. However, in some cases, damage to the hearing is permanent and the hearing loss can progress with age.

How does Cancer relate to hearing loss?

Chemotherapy - Medications that can damage the inner ear are called ototoxic. Certain types of chemotherapy are ototoxic. The first sign of ototoxicity is often tinnitus. Hearing loss usually occurs when the medication damages the hair cells in the inner ear which processes sound. Ask your consulting physician for ototoxic drugs related to hearing loss and chemotherapy.

Radiation therapy - High doses of radiation therapy to the head, ear, or brain can cause inner ear damage. Radiation therapy can also cause middle and outer ear problems. This may include inflammation, earwax buildup, fluid buildup, and stiffening of the bones in the ear, which can affect hearing.



- ✓ Speech is unclear in noisy situations
- ✓ People's voices sound muffled
- ✓ Asking for repetitions
- ✓ TV/ Radio volume is too loud
- ✓ Unable to hear clearly over the telephone
- ✓ Sounds in the ear

HEARING LOSS
may affect
CANCER
SURVIVORS
even years after treatment

The first step is to inform your Doctor of the difficulties you are experiencing. They will then advise that you visit an Audiologist for a hearing evaluation to determine the severity of the hearing loss, if present.

Things to avoid:

Alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, dehydration, stress and fatigue, as these can worsen the effects of tinnitus.



SERVICING A HEARING AID

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Your hearing will continue to change just as your eyesight does. Hearing aids will require periodic maintenance and adjustments throughout their life span to reflect the changing situation.

WHAT IS A HEARING AID WARRANTY?

The warranties cover failure of the instruments or components within the instrument due to manufacturers fault. The warranty period can vary between 1 to 2.5 years. It is important to note that most hearing aid repairs are made on receivers and microphones which fail due to wax, moisture or dirt build up. It is rare that the amplifier fails in modern hearing aids but it does occur for some patients.



DO YOU HAVE AN AFTERCARE SCHEDULE?

Audiologists usually see you on a 1 to 2 year basis. Some patients need more attention than others because of ear condition and hearing loss type. However, you should at least be on an annual re-assessment schedule. This allows the Audiologist to monitor the hearing and hearing aid benefit as well as make any adjustments according to the new hearing test results and on your experiences.



WHAT IS A HEARING AID SERVICE ?

A service is done by the hearing aid manufacturer, it involves a process that allows for a thorough cleaning and checking of the hearing aid:



- Cleaning of battery contacts
- Cleaning of tubing & mould/dome
- Cleaning of internal & external casing
- Cleaning of microphones & covers
- Cleaning of receiver & wax filter
- Check hearing aid performance
- Read patient data log
- Test output levels to ensure they match its specifications



By conducting these checks the supplier then sends feedback to the Audiologist with their findings. This guides the Audiologist in counselling the patient in areas that could be a potential risk factor to the hearing aid lifespan and advise them on the best measures to take in cleaning and maintaining the hearing aid.