

Helping Your Patients with Hearing Loss

Tips for Family Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, & Office Staff

Creating the Best Environment for Communication:

- Reduce the background noise whenever possible. Turn off the television, radio, air conditioner, etc. Understand that some situations are more difficult than others, such as in the car, in background noise, etc.
- Face your patient directly.
- Get on their level. If they are sitting, have a seat. Stand when they stand.
- The intensity of your voice significantly decreases over a distance. Try to be within four feet or less of your patient. Refrain from talking with your head turned or looking down.

Things You Can Do:

- Get your patient's attention before you speak.
- **Speak in a normal fashion, just slightly more slowly and clearly.** Raising your speaking volume distorts your speech, making it even more difficult to understand for some patients
- Keep your hands away from your face while you are talking.
- If your patient is having difficulty understanding something you are saying, rephrase the sentence. Check to see that your patient understood. Ask them to repeat important info.
- Recognize that listening for someone with a hearing loss is hard work! They will have a harder time when they are tired or feeling ill.

Things to Understand about Hearing Technology:

- Hearing Technology use takes time and practice to become accustomed to. Your patient has to work at learning to hear sounds again.
- Hearing technology does not restore hearing. Nothing can restore the damage that causes a permanent, sensorineural hearing loss. Today's digital hearing devices greatly help in compensating for the hearing loss, but they do not totally restore one's ability to hear and understand speech.
- Hearing technology is not indestructible. Hearing aids are tiny computers placed in a very hostile environment (the ear!). It is common for hearing technology to fail if it is not cared for and cleaned regularly.

REFER to

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