

# Yale Hearing and Balance Center



Yale School of Medicine



Yale Medical Group

THE PHYSICIANS OF YALE UNIVERSITY

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*When someone in the family has a hearing loss, the entire family has a hearing problem.*

~ Mark Ross, Ph.D.

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## Enjoying the Holidays with Hearing Loss

### Simple tips and troubleshooting

Holidays are filled with wonderful memories, particularly those of sound; such as the oven timer heralding that dinner is ready or special songs. When a family member has a hearing loss the holidays can be challenging. The following tips were adapted from Paula Rosenthal, J.D., a bilateral cochlear implant recipient. She is also the founder of Hearing Exchange, an online community for hearing impaired people and their families. Her suggestions include:

1) Include your hearing impaired family member in holiday planning. This allows for troubleshooting of potential hearing difficulties in ad-

vance.

- 2) Arrange seating thoughtfully. Be sure to seat someone with hearing impairment away from noisy areas such as the television and the kitchen.
- 3) Consider using an FM listening device. Place the microphone in the center of the table or pass it to someone who giving a toast.
- 4) Lower the volume of background music. This will ease the load of listening for everyone.
- 5) Develop a signal. A simple hand wave can tip the host or hostess off that the



music is too loud, or that the last joke should be repeated.

For more information visit this website: [www.hearingexchange.com](http://www.hearingexchange.com) or call your audiologist at **Yale Hearing and Balance Center** to discuss your options.

## The Effect of Chronic Ear Infections on Social Skills

### Ear infections may also negatively impact education

Recent research on the effects of chronic ear infections in children and adults showed that patients who had greater hearing loss due to ear infections had lower social skills. It seems that there is a relationship

between hearing loss due to ear infections and social skills. The authors stated that ear infections may also negatively impact education. To learn more, go online to [www.audiology.org/news111408a.htm](http://www.audiology.org/news111408a.htm) Signs

that you or your child may have an ear infection include: ear pain, fever, or drainage from the ear. If you or your child have these symptoms, call and make an appointment at the **Yale Hearing and Balance Center**.

## Open Fit Hearing Aids

Experience greater comfort, better sound quality and sleek designs

Open fit hearing aids changed the look and sound of hearing technology when they entered the market in 2005. This type of hearing aid has many advantages, including greater comfort, natural sound quality and cosmetic appeal. These sleek devices are ideal for people who have a moderate hearing loss in the lower pitches and a more severe hearing loss in the high pitches. This pattern of hearing loss, sometimes called a sloping hearing loss, is typical for



healthy, aging adults. In the past, these patients have been frustrated with the sound quality of their own voice when wearing hearing aids. They complained that their voice sounded "hollow" or "booming," this is called the "occlusion effect." The occlusion effect occurs when an earmold fills up the outer portion of the ear canal and "traps" low pitched sound. This property can make the sound quality uncomfortable and unnatural.

Open fit hearing aids do not plug up

the ear canal. They typically use a small, state-of-the-art dome to deliver the sound. This dome allows low pitched sounds to be heard naturally and to escape the ear canal the way they would with normal hearing, this makes the sound quality more pleasing. This type of device also allows for air flow into and out of the ear canal, which can reduce itching and irritation sometimes associated with traditional amplification. Not all hearing losses are appropriate for open fit hearing aids. To learn more about these devices and to find out if you are a candidate, call your audiologist at the **Yale Hearing and Balance Center** today.

## Cochlear Implant Forum

March 16 from 6:00-9:00 PM and March 17 from 8:00 a.m.-4:30 PM

The **Yale Hearing and Balance Center** and Cochlear Americas will host a two day forum on cochlear implants. On March 16, the forum will focus on "lively listening"; participants can expect to learn more about maximizing outcomes with cochlear implants. This forum is tailored to meet the needs of parents, family members and professionals. On March 17, the forum

will focus on facilitating conversational competency in children with hearing loss. The intended audience for this forum is professionals who work with deaf and hard of hearing children; however, parents may find the

workshop helpful and are welcome to attend. Registration fees are \$25 for March 16, \$95 for March 17, or \$110 for both days. Please register at [www.regonline.com/657999](http://www.regonline.com/657999) or call 1-303-524-7190 if you have any questions.

Upcoming Cochlear Implant Forum on March 16 and 17 for CI users, parents, family members and professionals!

## Stocking Stuffers

Available now at Yale Hearing and Balance Center

Looking for the perfect stocking stuffer for the child or adult who has it all? Consider customized personal listening earphones. Personal listening earphones can be used with iPods, MP3 players, CD players, handheld games and laptop computers. Because these products are custom-made, they block out

environmental sounds, allow for better sound quality and are comfortable to wear. To order, make an appointment with your audiologist. At the time of your appointment, an earmold impression will be made



and colors will be chosen. Please allow two weeks for delivery. For more information call your audiologist at **Yale Hearing and Balance Center**.

## Connecticut Lion's Club Continues Support

**Without critical support, our center would not be able to continue such a high standard of care to our valued patients**

For the last 29 years, District 23-A of the Connecticut's Lion's Club has actively participated in the hearing healthcare of the patients at the **Yale Hearing and Balance Center**. The Lion's Club's generous donations have helped to provide our center with diagnostic and rehabilitation equipment for both children and adults. Past donations have included creating a loaner frequency modulation (FM) system and a loaner hearing aid bank. The Lion's Club has also helped with purchasing the center's first auditory brainstem response (ABR) system, which is used to help diagnose hearing loss in children and adults, as well as identify other disorders of



Left to right: Meryl Aronin, Joan Bennett, Elias Michaelides, M.D., Rosemary Spatafore, Steven Leder, Ph.D., Mike Granatak, Walter Sherman



the auditory system. Most recently, the Lion's Club donations have gone towards purchasing two new audiometers. These pieces of equipment are used daily to determine the hearing sensitivity of our patients. In addition, with the help of the Lion's club, our center has purchased a new ABR system. Not only have the Lion's provided valuable donations, they also help purchase hearing aids for those with financial restrictions. We greatly appreciate the Lion's Club continuous support of our center. For more information about Lion's Club visit [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)

## Grandparents As Parents Support Program

### Pediatric and Adult Hearing Screenings

The Grandparents As Parents Support Program (GAPS), is a state-wide program designed to encourage and promote the creation of services for relatives who have taken on the responsibility of parenting. In October, the **Yale Hearing and Balance Program** was pleased to provide hearing screenings to community children and kinship caregivers, as well as provide a short

program on pediatric and adult hearing healthcare. We are equally excited about an upcoming program to the same group on adult basic balance and vestibular awareness. The **Yale Hearing and Balance Center** is dedicated to community education on

hearing and balance issues. Please contact our center if your group is interested in scheduling an event.

To learn more about the GAPS program, please contact The Consultation Center at **203-789-7645**.

**Please contact our center if your group is interested in scheduling a hearing screening.**

## Health Savings Accounts and Hearing Aids

### Prepare now for hearing aid expenses over the next year

Health savings accounts, or HSAs, are savings accounts into which individuals can deposit money from their paychecks and then withdraw it tax-free for eligible medical expenses. HSA funds can be used for a wide range of medical services, including: professional services received from an audiologist, hearing

aids and hearing aid batteries. The IRS publication 907, Tax Highlights for Persons with Disabilities, states that the following are covered medical expenses: hearing aids and cost/repair of special telephone equipment for hearing impaired persons. If you are faced with replacing/repairing hearing aids or special-

ized equipment for yourself or a dependent over the next year, check with your health benefits specialist to set up an appropriate HSA. This will ensure that you are prepared to purchase/repair your or your family member's equipment when needed and that you benefit from the tax savings.

**YALE HEARING AND BALANCE CENTER**

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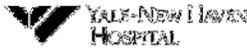
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*Insert Mailing Label*

Yale Hearing and Balance's newsletter is written to inform the public and the Center's patients, donors and staff on current items of interest. Yale Hearing and Balance complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter please call Erika Nair at (203) 785-2467 or email erika.nair@yale.edu.

# We're Listening...

**Please submit your questions to erika.nair@yale.edu. If your question is chosen you will receive three packages of hearing aid or cochlear implant batteries free of charge.**



There are four reasons cited by the American Academy of Audiology for wearing two hearing aids.

- 1) **Better Hearing in Noise**  
Hearing in noise is improved when sound reaches the ears at slightly different times. When both ears are aided this happens naturally. When one ear is aided the non-aided ear will not receive clear sound. This makes it difficult because both ears aren't able to help clarify the message.
- 2) **Optimizing Hearing Position**  
As sound travels around your head, it becomes softer. This is

## Do I really need to wear two hearing aids?

not a problem for vowel sounds, which are already robust. However, consonant sounds are softer and lose their loudness as they travel around your head. By the time they reach your aided ear they may be too soft to hear. If both ears are aided, then both ears can pick up the sound, which will reduce the need to turn your head or ask someone to move chairs.

3) **Improved Localization**  
Localization, or the ability to determine where a sound is coming from, is all about timing. As previously mentioned, sound enters the ear at different times depending on where it

is coming from. When both ears are aided, this ability occurs naturally. When one ear is not aided, the unaided ear will not hear well; this makes it difficult to determine where the sound is coming from, which is important for safety.

4) **Deterioration of the Other Ear**  
We hear with our brains not our ears. The ultimate goal of hearing aids is to make sure that a clear signal makes it to the brain, so that it can be understood and interpreted. If only one ear is aided, that pathway to the brain will be "exercised," and as a result, it will stay strong. The other ear will not stay strong because it will not have the same input.