



Grafton - Glen Innes - Inverell

Welcome to the Winter 2025 edition of Accent Hearing's Newsletter *The Listener*.

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EXCELLENCE IN LISTENING ${\cal C}$

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Up to a third of dementia cases could be due to hearing loss, study suggests.....



This cohort study suggests that treating hearing loss might delay dementia for a large number of older adults. Public health interventions targeting clinically significant audiometric hearing loss might have broad benefits for dementia prevention. Future research quantifying population attributable fractions should carefully consider which measures are used to define hearing loss, as self-reporting may underestimate hearing-associated dementia risk. Dementia is a term used to describe a group of cognitive symptoms that affect memory, thinking, and the ability to perform daily tasks. It is not a single disease but rather a range of conditions that occur due to different neurocognitive conditions.

Symptoms of dementia include:

- Memory loss | Confusion | Mood Changes
- Communication challenges
- Trouble with planning and organising
- Impaired judgement | Personality changes
- Difficulty with complex tasks
- Withdrawal | Loss of initiative

Ishak E, Burg EA, Pike JR, et al. Population Attributable Fraction of Incident Dementia Associated With Hearing Loss. JAMA Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg. Published online April 17, 2025. doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2025.0192

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What makes us behave differently when it comes to our hearing?

Many misconceptions contribute to the reluctance to seek help. Here are some common myths debunked:

• Myth: Hearing loss only affects older people. While age-related hearing loss is common, noise-induced hearing loss is on the rise, especially among younger Australians. Protecting ears from excessive noise is crucial at any age.

• Myth: Hearing aids are big, bulky, and obvious. Modern hearing aids are small, discreet, and can include features like Bluetooth connectivity and noise filtering.

• Myth: If you had hearing loss, you'd know about it. Not so! Hearing loss often develops gradually, making it easy to miss. These signs include difficulty understanding speech on the phone or in noisy environments or feeling like people are mumbling.

• Myth: <u>Hearing loss isn't a big deal.</u> Untreated hearing loss can significantly impact mental health, relationships, and overall well-being, and is linked to social isolation, depression, and cognitive decline.

• Myth: <u>Hearing aids will fix everything</u>. Hearing aids amplify sound and improve clarity but don't restore hearing to perfect levels. Adjustment time is needed.

• Myth: You can't prevent hearing loss. Many causes of hearing loss are preventable. Protecting ears from loud noise, maintaining good ear hygiene, and getting regular hearing checks can help preserve hearing.

As with many health conditions, GPs play a pivotal role in the early detection and management of hearing loss. Unfortunately, there is a lack of awareness among GPs, who are already extremely busy, and this can lead to delayed diagnosis and inadequate support. Research by Macquarie University shows that just three in every 1,000 GP consultations in Australia with patients aged 50 or older involves management of hearing loss.

Lego stuck in man's ear for 20 years caused hearing problems

A Scottish man has relayed the story of how a tiny Lego piece stuck in his ear 'for the best part of 20 years' caused hearing loss until it popped out one night.

Darren McConachie, 30, from Glasgow, believed he was going deaf at age 24 and saw a doctor, receiving antibiotics for a presumed ear infection. A few days later, he woke in the night with his left ear in agony and sat up in bed, feeling a surge of pressure in the side of his head before feeling something dislodge in his ear and move, the newspaper reported. "I thought my ear had ruptured. The pressure kept building and building. It was unbearable," he said. "Then I felt something small and hard sort of pop out. I felt the object and realised it was loose. With the pain, pressure and Lego piece gone, the sound returned in his left ear, and he said his hearing was now very good. McConachie, a journalism student, said he had not played with Lego since he was aged four or five as he preferred playing with wrestling figures and football with his brothers.



McConachie retold his story to help raise awareness of cerumen removal using microsuction. *Helen Carter Hearing Practitioner Australia April 2025*

Ambient Noise Is "The New Secondhand Smoke"

Like unwanted tobacco smoke, noise doesn't just bother people but also adversely affects human health and function. Secondhand smoke causes cancer, sudden infant death syndrome, respiratory disease in children, and coronary heart disease (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018). Similarly, unwanted single exposures to loud noise can cause hearing loss, tinnitus, and hyperacusis, whereas chronic noise exposure undoubtedly causes hearing loss and tinnitus. Noise disturbs concentration and interferes with learning. Chronic noise exposure has little known but well-documented nonauditory health effects including cardiovascular disease (Münzel et al., 2018) and increased mortality (Basner et al., 2014; Hammer et al., 2014). The sounds that matter to people are the ones reaching the tympanic membranes of the listener or perhaps the cochlear hair cells and associated peripheral nerves and central auditory processing centers.

Sound energy causes auditory damage and activates the stress responses to noise. The equal-energy hypothesis states that equal amounts of sound energy will produce equal amounts of hearing impairment and other effects, regardless of how the sound energy is distributed in time (Kryter, 1994; Berglund et al., 1999). The hypothesis may, however, underestimate the damage done by intermittent or impulse noise.

Recipe for 'A Quiet Diet' to preserve the quiet in your life.

- Pay attention to the noises you make and respect your neighbour's right to peace and quiet.
- Turn down the volume two notches on your radios and personal stereo systems with headphones.
- Turn down the volume one notch on your television.
- Do NOT honk your horn, except in the case of imminent danger.
- Do NOT tip cab drivers who honk their horns illegally.
- Avoid noisy sports events, restaurants, rock concerts and nightclubs unless you use hearing protection.
- Replace noisy activities with quiet ones such as taking a walk, visits to libraries and museums.
- Ask your health club instructor to lower the music.
- Ask the movie theater manager to turn down the volume.
- Wear hearing protection if you must be in a noisy environment (using power tools or mowing the lawn etc)
- Turn off the television during dinner and have a quiet conversation instead.
- Have your hearing checked regularly.
- Spread the word about the danger of noise.

https://exploresound.org/international-noise-awareness-day/

University of Queensland Masters Student Jack Lysaught in Grafton for Audiology Training

UQ Student Jack Lysaught attended a 2-week placement at Accent Hearing just recently in May. Under the guidance of Doctor of Audiology and Clinical Educator Greg Butcher, these placements are a compulsory unit in being fully qualified after 2 years of study. His undergraduate degree was in Psychology, which will be very handy for the counselling of hearing patients. Jack also has a brother with a profound hearing loss, who he communicates with using AUSLAN (Aust. Sign Language). He has 6 months until graduation in December, where he will be looking for full-time employment. With the high demand for audiological aid, he will have no trouble finding work. Jack thoroughly enjoyed his time in Grafton, visiting family and exploring new aspects of audiology.





<u>Please remember</u> to tell us if you are now on a Government Pension (if you were a private client previously) when making a hearing review appointment. This will make a big difference to

your payment schedule at the end of your appointment and will help you with battery & maintenance program.



"I Don't Need the Headphones"

A Common MRI Misunderstanding. "I'll be fine without the headphones." A sentence Radiographers hear all the time in the MRI suite. They kindly explain: "The scanner gets really loud, please wear headphones or earplugs to protect your hearing." But some patients still smile and shake their heads. They're confident. Unbothered. Ready. Until the scan starts. At first, silence. Then: BA-BANG! BA-BANG! BA-BANG! Five minutes in: shifting around. Seven minutes: furrowed brows. Ten minutes: usually presses communication buzzer - "Umm... actually, can I still get those headphones?" Patient says "I thought you were exaggerating. That machine sounds like it's remixing a metal concert!" Here's the thing: MRI scanners can reach up to 120 decibels, about the same as standing near a plane during take-off. This isn't just about comfort, it's about safety. Without proper hearing protection, there's a real risk of temporary or permanent hearing damage. So when they offer headphones or earplugs, it's not a suggestion or option. It's essential and standard best practice.

Hearing Aids



d Opera Dome Ear Trumpet





Batteries Concealed



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How the brain without sound reorganizes itself......

As our senses of hearing, vision, touch, smell, and taste diminish, our brains compensate for what is lost and find new ways to maximize the sensory input we have. The auditory cortex is the region responsible for processing sound, but when hearing is lost, the brain doesn't simply let this area go dark and unused. Instead, it rewires itself through a process called cross-modal neuroplasticity, where other senses-such as vision and touchstep in and take over parts of the auditory cortex. Essentially, the brain repurposes its resources to make the most of the sensory information it still receives. This has been confirmed by multiple functional MRI studies, which show that in people with hearing loss, the auditory cortex is restructured and repurposed to enhance other senses.

One particular study discovered that people who are deaf from an early age pay more attention to the outer part of their vision during tasks, as their brains had reallocated resources from the auditory cortex to the visual cortex, allowing them to absorb and interpret visual data more quickly and accurately.

To be clear, untreated hearing loss is a significant health issue that not only negatively impacts your ability to communicate but is also associated with a wide range of chronic mental and physical conditions, from dementia to depression. The bottom line is that if you have hearing loss, you should consult a hearing care professional and explore your treatment options.

While hearing loss hampers a person's ability to navigate the world, from the brain's perspective, as our senses of hearing, vision, touch, smell, and taste deepen, it becomes about compensating and creating something new.

https://www.hearingtracker.com/resources/how-hearing-loss -can-supercharge-your-other-senses? utm_source=hearingtracker.com&utm_medium=newsletter

Did you know...

An analysis of 27 previous studies involving more than five million people, including Australians, has found that people with hearing loss are at higher risk of falls. In this systematic review Hearing Loss was associated with 51% greater cross-sectional odds and 17% greater longitudinal risk of falls compared with individuals without HL. JAMA Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg. Published online March 20, 2025. doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2025.0056

Hearing Aids & Water Don't' Mix

It is very important after wearing your hearing aids each day, to physically inspect the battery door compartment and the hearing aids in general for any moisture that may have entered



the battery door compartment area. This may happen if you sweat profusely or have accidently got your hearing aids wet stepping into the shower. If any moisture is present you will need to dry it with a tissue and remove the battery for it to dry completely. If this is not done regularly, constant moisture will start to corrode parts of the hearing aid, leaving brown marks in the battery compartment, leading to possible corrosion in the electronic parts of the hearing aid.



Accent Hearing Clinics - 1300 859 828

- **GRAFTON** | 23 Queen Street, Grafton NSW.
- **GLEN INNES** | Glen Innes Chiropractic Centre, 113 Meade Street, Glen Innes NSW.
- **INVERELL** | Inverell Hospital Community Health, 41 Swanbrook Road, Inverell NSW.

Accent Hearing is independent and is locally owned. Our clinician Dr Greg Butcher is a University trained Doctor of Audiology; a fully Accredited Member of Audiology Australia and Independent Audiologists Australia; and a qualified Medicare Hearing Services Provider.