

Health Mind & Body

Consequences of Untreated Hearing Loss

More than three million (3,000,000) Canadians suffer from some degree of hearing loss. In fact, hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic disability among older adults superseded only by arthritis and hypertension. Hearing loss is most common in people over 65 years of age, but many children and younger adults also live with hearing loss. Often referred to as "an unseen handicap," hearing loss in older adults tends to be gradual which leads a person to believe that they are still hearing as well as they once did when in fact they are missing many of the sounds around them. Due to its slow insidious progress, an individual with hearing loss adapts to his/her condition and begins to believe that not understanding speech in the presence of noise, in groups of people, and when someone speaks quickly, is normal.

Many people tend to think of hearing loss as part of the "natural aging process," thereby discouraging people from seeking help. Recognizing hearing loss is only part of the problem. Many people do not know where to go for help when they suspect hearing loss. In Ontario, only audiologists and physicians are authorized to prescribe hearing aids. Audiologists have (at minimum) a Masters degree at the university level and



“ One in 10 Canadians has a speech and/or language disorder. ”

are concerned with the prevention, identification, assessment, treatment and (re)habilitation of hearing difficulties in babies, children and adults.

One in five Canadians with decreased hearing would rather live with their hearing loss than wear a hearing aid. The reluctance to wear hearing aids stems mainly from the stigmas associating hearing aids with aging and diminished mental awareness. However, the consequences that result from not wearing hearing aids far outweigh the potential benefits. As hearing loss is untreated or progressively worsens, the difficulty of not understanding speech clearly can deteriorate since the brain is no longer used to hearing the variety of sounds that were once heard. The longer a person waits before pursuing amplification can make the adjustment to wearing hearing aids more difficult.

Untreated hearing loss can lead to social isolation, withdrawal from activities, denial or avoidance of responsibility, and overall negative behaviour. A range of emotional changes such as anger towards family and friends, depression, anxiety, guilt, feelings of loneliness, incompetence and embarrassment, are also often the result of untreated hearing loss.

Hearing loss does not have to restrict your life. A well-fit hearing aid can improve communication. Quality of life is dramatically enhanced when one is not constantly guessing what others might be saying. It is important to remember that hearing aids are not "new ears." If you know their possibilities and limitations, you will have much more realistic expectations of hearing aids and much greater success with them. It is extremely important to make sure that hearing aid usage and benefits are carefully and clearly explained to you.

If you have any questions or concerns, the staff at the HearSay Speech & Hearing Centre can help. Speak with one of the Audiologists to address any concerns or questions at (905)875-3345.



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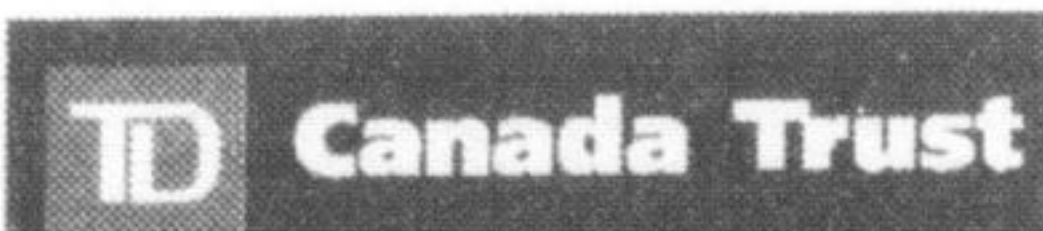


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Wednesday, October 25th, 2006
6:30 pm: Displays and Refreshments
7:00 pm: Presentation

LeDome Banquet Hall
1173 North Service Road East, Oakville

With:

Dr. Deborah Terespolsky
Clinical Geneticist, Credit Valley Hospital

&

Carole Bertuzzi Luciani
Moodivational Speaker and Humourist

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