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**2017 01.24 Health Matters**

**Hearing Loss Update**

**Joe**

**This is Health Matters, with the latest on hearing loss.**

**Kristen**

**It’s common knowledge that hearing loss can come with age. Illness and genetics are also factors. So, what are your chances on the down-hill side of 60? One out of three people between the ages of 65 and 74 has some level of hearing loss. After 75, it’s one out of every two people.**

**Taushona**

**But age is far from the only cause of hearing loss. Modern life offers a basketful of factors . Both lifestyle and environmental. Loud noise and headphones are major causes. So are prescription drugs. Perhaps more surprising, smoking damages the nerves that enable hearing.**

**Joe**

**As for headphones, experts believe that headphones are largely responsible for the recent rise in hearing loss among teenagers. Primarily headphones used at high volume. High-tech’s delivery of loud noise has delivered a serious blow to teenage hearing. One out of five teens has some form of hearing loss. That is a staggering statistic. And a sad one.**

**Kristen**

**And the younger the child, the sadder the situation. Because even mild hearing loss in children can lead to developmental delays in speech and language. Parents may well be wondering how loud is too loud for headphone devices.**

**Taushona**

**Here’s a fact that will give you some idea: Most MP3 players can produce sounds up to 120 decibels. And what exactly does that mean? 120 decibels is the equivalent of sound levels at a rock concert !**

**Joe**

**Here’s another say to look at it: 120 decibels is 40% higher than hearing nerves can tolerate. At that level, hearing loss can occur after an hour and 15 minutes.**

**Kristen**

**What’s a parent to do? Or a grandparent or an auntie or an uncle? Well, there’s one simple rule of thumb. If a child is using headphones and can’t hear anything that’s going on around her, it means the decibel level is too high.**

**Taushona**

**Another rule of thumb is that the volume on these devices should never be higher than 60% of the maximum. It’s important to teach children the risks that high volume pose to their hearing. And it’s easy enough to show them what 60% of the volume level is on their headphone sets.**

**Joe**

**There’s another rule of thumb that is harder to get young people to follow. And that has to do with much time they spend listening with headphones. How long is too long? Well, the louder the volume, the shorter the listening time should be. Five minutes is he limit for headphones at maximum volume. But really, headphones should be never used at maximum volume.**

**Kristen**

**Even when using headphones at 60% of the volume capacity, a total of 60 minutes a day is what is safe. One hour a day -- that’s the limit. Anything longer than that is too long.**

**Taushona**

**I was surprised to learn that prescription drugs can cause hearing loss.**

**Joe**

**That’s relatively new information. Approximately 200 medications can damage hearing. Including certain antibiotics, chemotherapy drugs, and medications for erectile dysfunction. Even high doses of aspirin can harm hearing. For anyone on medication, this is something to check out with your doctor. Learn your options for reducing the negative impact.**

**Kristen**

**Right. If you must take a medication that could harm your ears, you’ll want to do whatever you can to minimize this. And you’ll want to make sure your doctor checks your hearing and sense of balance before and during your treatment. Because balance is directly related to hearing. And lack of balance is often why elders fall.**

**Taushona**

**Certain illnesses pose a risk to hearing. Primarily heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. These diseases interfere with the blood supply to the ears.**

**Joe**

**Sudden hearing loss is another matter. Trauma to the skull or a punctured ear drum puts ears at serious risk for hearing loss. As does infection and even ear wax build up, which can block the ear canals.**

**Kristen**

**The good news is that some hearing loss can be recovered. But damage caused by loud noise is irreversible. Next week we’ll go discuss ways to prevent hearing loss. And explore what’ involved with the promise of recovery.**

**Joe**

**Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA.  Produced and written by Cynthia Poten. Engineered by Joseph Orozco.  Our readers were Kristen Marshall, David Moon and Joseph Orozco.  For this audio and more information, visit our download area at  www.kidefm.org. Thank you for listening. Your health adds to the health of our community.**

**Sources and Links**

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