

Hearing Loss And Hearing Aid Myths Debunked – Fiction vs. Fact

By Crystal Chalmers, Au.D
Doctor of Audiology
Owner, North State Audiological Services

A recently completed study by Johns Hopkins University – published on November 14, 2011 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* – now confirms that 1 in 5 Americans have hearing loss in at least one ear. This is well over 50 million people and far exceeds previous hearing care industry estimates of approximately 25 million.

The Johns Hopkins study is unique in that the data used statistically corresponded with the entire US population by including both men and women of all races, aged 12 and older, living in cities throughout the country.

Using the World Health Organization’s definition of hearing loss – not being able to hear sounds of 25 decibels or less in the speech frequencies – the Johns Hopkins researchers found that over 30 million Americans have hearing loss in both ears and that over 20% of the population – in excess of 50 million people – have hearing loss in at least one ear.

Despite there being so many of us with hearing difficulties, too many people are still unaware of how or where to obtain professional help as the misconceptions about hearing loss and hearing aids are commonplace in our society. The fact that you are reading this article is an excellent first step towards empowering yourself (or a family member) and taking control of your hearing health.

Common Hearing Loss and Hearing Aid Myths

Myth: Buying hearing devices online, by mail, or at a big box store saves time, money, and gets the same results as professionally fit devices.

Fact: The proper diagnosis and selection of hearing technology as a solution for hearing difficulties is not the same thing as purchasing common consumer goods. Rather, it should be a process built upon a relationship of respect and trust between the patient and a highly trained, competent, and ethical professional whose services and products provide long-term value.

Myth: Anyone licensed to sell hearing aids is qualified to test a person’s hearing.

Fact: By law in the state of California, only audiologists are licensed to perform diagnostic hearing evaluations. The “free” tests that hearing aid dispensers frequently

advertise are not comprehensive exams and are merely designed to determine if a person could be helped by a hearing aid.

Myth: Hearing loss affects only “elderly” people and is merely a sign of aging.

Fact: Hearing loss can affect people of all ages. As mentioned in the Johns Hopkins study, 20% of the US population aged 12 years and older have hearing difficulties severe enough to impact communication.

Myth: Hearing aids don’t really do anything but amplify sound. Besides they’re unsightly and uncomfortable.

Fact: While the hearing aids from 20 years ago left a lot to be desired from both technology and cosmetic standpoints, today’s hearing devices are exceptional technological performers and are so small as to be very discreet. However, the most important consideration for you, the consumer, is not what the product is, but rather how it is fit to your lifestyle, and to what extent you are provided with expert follow-up in the fitting of that device. That is what makes my patients so successful in being able to enjoy better hearing.

Would you like to learn more about solutions to hearing difficulties and hearing aid technology? Here are two great places to start.... Because hearing is wonderful gift!:

#1.) My Internet website at www.nsaudiology.com This educational website offers a world of information, including highly informative videos, a free guide to better hearing, online specials, current “News & Events”, and the “Ask Dr. Chalmers” section where I have posted previously published original articles such as the one you are reading now.

#2.) www.hearingloss.com lists a tremendous wealth of information about hearing loss and hearing technology.

For more informative articles on hearing care topics, this site -- www.hearingcareblog.com – has dozens of articles written by fellow independent audiologists and hearing care professionals and colleagues of mine at AudigyGroup.

About the writer: Crystal Chalmers, Au.D., is an AudigyCertified™ Doctor of Audiology, the owner of North State Audiological Services in Chico, and a member of AudigyGroup, the nation’s largest member-owned association of independent hearing care professionals.

Since 2006, AudigyGroup has interviewed over 5,000 of the 18,000 audiologists in the United States, yet has selected only 250 to be members in this elite association.

AudigyCertified™ is a trade-mark of AudigyGroup, LLC.

To learn more about Dr. Chalmers, her practice, and AudigyGroup visit online at www.nsaudiology.com or call (888) 844-7024