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Governor



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Kentuckians Urged to Act Now on Their Hearing Loss

May Is Better Hearing and Speech Month

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 1, 2023) — With approximately 15% of American adults reporting difficulty hearing, Gov. Andy Beshear and the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) are encouraging people to learn the signs of hearing loss—and to seek care during Better Hearing and Speech Month in May.

“We know that more than 700,000 Kentuckians of all ages are experiencing some degree of hearing loss. We encourage people to have a professional check their hearing and also to protect their hearing from loud noises,” said Gov. Beshear.

Signs of hearing loss in adults include the following:

- Difficulty following conversations
- Difficulty hearing in noisy environments
- Hearing ringing, roaring or beeping in one or both ears
- Failure to respond to spoken words
- Muffled hearing
- Constant frustration hearing speech and other sounds
- Avoidance of conversation

“Our hearing is key to so many aspects of our lives, but it’s something that many people undervalue until they are having severe hearing difficulties,” said Virginia Moore, KCDHH executive director. “Even then, some people wait years to receive treatment, if ever. This is despite the fact that audiologists can help people in many different ways.

“Hearing loss is much more than a simple nuisance. Left unaddressed, it can affect us in a variety of ways, including increased risk for physical danger such as falling or missing warning signals

like a fire alarm; mental health problems, including social isolation and depression; and cognitive decline, including earlier onset of dementia. Our personal relationships, career success and health care costs can be affected as well,” according to Moore.

As a first step, Moore urges anyone concerned about their own hearing or that of a loved one to seek an evaluation from a certified audiologist. Private insurance, Medicaid and Medicare generally cover such evaluations. People can take this step even if they think they cannot afford hearing aids or other hearing services. Audiologists can advise people on ways to make hearing aids more affordable. In addition, various organizations offer financial assistance.

Aside from hearing aids, audiologists can identify other ways to improve a person’s listening and communication skills. They also can help families support loved ones affected by hearing loss. If you are experiencing any of the signs above or if you think you have hearing loss, see your doctor or a licensed audiologist to assess the degree of your hearing loss, treat it and develop a plan to prevent further loss. There are several assistive technologies available through KCDHH’s Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) that can help you stay connected to emergency information and health care providers.

For more information, contact Virginia Moore at 502-573-2604 or virginia.moore@ky.gov. You also may visit the KCDHH website.

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