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October is National Audiology Awareness Month—KCDHH Reminds the Public to Protect Their Hearing and Get it Checked

Untreated hearing loss is a risk factor for falls and dementia

(Frankfort, KY, September 8, 2021)— October is National Audiology Awareness Month and the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) is urging the public to be aware of the importance of good hearing health. The National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders states that [approximately 28.8 million Americans could benefit from the use of hearing aids](#). While age is often cited as a factor, there are growing numbers of younger people reporting hearing difficulties.

A study published by the [Lancet](#) Commission on Dementia Prevention, Intervention and Care cited nine risk factors for dementia. Midlife, untreated hearing loss is listed as one of those risk factors. The report also stated that dementia typically starts many years before it is recognized. Untreated hearing loss can impact the brain and cognitive health.

There is also a link between untreated hearing loss and falls. [According to a study](#) conducted by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, an increase in hearing loss in an individual, for instance going from normal hearing to an untreated mild hearing loss, is associated with a 3-fold increase in fall risk.

One of the factors in maintaining healthy hearing is being conscious of the degree and amount of loud sound exposure. More than 40 million Americans, aged 20 to 69, have some type of hearing loss with approximately 10 million of those attributable to noise-induced hearing loss. Managing sound exposure can protect hearing. Many hearing losses are caused by damage to the tiny sensory receptors, or hair cells, in the inner ear. The damage can be caused by too much noise, and it is permanent; however, steps can be taken to prevent this damage. The simplest way to protect your hearing if you can't avoid loud sounds is to wear hearing protection. An audiologist can help you identify the right hearing protection for you including custom hearing protection that can provide a comfortable fit and good sound quality.

The American Academy of Audiology states that lengthy or repeated exposure to noise above 85 decibels, can damage hearing. To put that into perspective, noise from fireworks can reach up to 155 decibels. A jet plane taking off is estimated to be 150 decibels. Shooting a gun is around 140-175 decibels (depending on the gun). An amplified music concert and an MP3 player with the volume turned all the way up can be as high (or higher) as 120 decibels. Movie action scenes in the theater have been known to reach 100 decibels. Outdoor sounds can pose a risk too. Lawn mowers are around 85 decibels and chain saws can be 115-120 decibels. Compare these with normal conversation that is around 60-65 decibels.

The four main ways for protecting your hearing are:

E – earplugs
A – avoid loud sounds
R – reduce the level of sounds
S – shorten time in loud environments

“There is no doubt people are concerned about their health. Often, though, they don’t think about the importance of hearing health,” said Virginia L. Moore, KCDHH Executive Director. “An audiologist educates patients about safe versus unsafe levels for listening. They utilize tools and share resources that empower patients to protect their hearing. Additionally, they perform hearing evaluations and facilitate aural rehabilitation efforts for hearing loss, tinnitus, and certain balance problems.”

Audiologists are equipped to work with the public during the pandemic and are practicing within CDC and local health guidelines.

“Anyone suspecting that his or her hearing has diminished, should see an audiologist and get tested as soon as possible,” Moore recommended.

For more information, visit kcdhh.ky.gov.

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About KCDHH

KCDHH, established in 1982, can put you in touch with appropriate resources and services to help minimize the negative impact hearing loss may have on your life. Books and videos on topics ranging from coping with a hearing loss to assistive devices, legal rights and parenting a child with a hearing loss are available through the library. KCDHH also distributes, at no cost, specialized telephone equipment to any Kentucky resident who has a hearing loss or speech impairment that affects his ability to effectively communicate using a regular telephone. The agency also provides communication visor cards and fact sheets targeting hearing loss and prevention. as well as information, referral and advocacy services.

About the American Academy of Audiology

The American Academy of Audiology is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. Representing the interests of approximately 14,000 audiologists nationwide, the Academy is dedicated to providing quality hearing care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders. For more information or to find an audiologist, go to www.howsyourhearing.org.