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LISTEN UP!

WHY HEARING LOSS MATTERS

Hearing is important; it affects many aspects of our daily lives. When hearing fails to work properly, it puts our health at risk. We are social creatures who pick up feelings and emotions from people when we hear the words they speak, as well as their tone and the inflection. If we fail to properly hear, we miss the sincerity and emotions that connect us to each other, and we become embarrassed in always asking others to repeat themselves. This development may cause us to withdraw and become frustrated, isolated, and even depressed.

The consequences can be even worse as you age and might contribute to serious illnesses if left untreated. Thankfully, there are effective ways for us to handle hearing loss and avoid these possible complications.

BAD HEARING = BAD HEALTH

Modern research shows that hearing is much more critical to our health than previously thought. Learning, comprehending, balance, and some medical issues are all associated with having functional hearing.

Given its extensive impact, it is not surprising that hearing is one of the most complicated systems in our bodies. More than 20 parts of the brain are associated with speech, hearing, and

communication. The inside of the inner ear, the cochlea, houses hair cells that send hearing messages to the brain as a key part of this system.

The cochlea hears best at a frequency range of 250 - 8,000 hertz. Consonant and vowel sounds which allow us to understand speech are spread along this spectrum. If our cochlea cannot accurately communicate to the brain what type of sound is occurring on this spectrum, then we may start confusing words.

This loss in hearing triggers more than just embarrassment and confusion. It reduces stimulation to the hearing and communication parts of our brain. That change is linked with increased risk for dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The odds worsen as we age – older adults with severe hearing loss are five times more likely to develop dementia over time than those who retain their hearing, according to Johns Hopkins and the National Institute on Aging.

Additionally, hearing helps determine where we are in a spatial environment, which contributes to our balance. People with poor hearing can become startled by people or things they did not hear approaching them and tend to overreact. This can throw their balance off and can result in injuries.

Even medical conditions can affect our ability to hear. A National Institutes of Health study found that people who have diabetes are twice as likely to show signs of hearing loss.

The good news is that we can fight these healthcare challenges

by addressing hearing problems directly. There are better options to do that now than ever before.

NEWLY DESIGNED SOLUTIONS

Modern day science has increased the knowledge of and technology for hearing loss dramatically. Hearing aids fit better and work more efficiently than in the past, as well as provide better sound quality. These new designs allow some hearing aids to be concealed very well – even appearing invisible to the naked eye – and have a more sleeker look and feel than before.

Specialized FDA-cleared medical devices and processes allow audiologists to personalize and customize each patient's hearing aids. These technologies use key testing procedures for optimal customization and preference, such as loudness mapping and acceptable noise level, to help determine which sounds are too soft or too loud for the patient.

Specialized medical devices provide readings to set a hearing aid for individual needs and help to fine tune aids, making hearing easier in noisy situations. By making hearing aids match the acoustics of your ear, you will avoid having to adjust your aid constantly.

This technology brings more value to hearing aids over the long run. While some people regard hearing aids as expensive, consider the technology and convenience you are receiving for their duration. A high-quality hearing aid's average life span is four to five years. Its cost breaks down to be less than a cup of coffee per day. Better quality hearing aids are a long-term investment, and a wise one to make, particularly for overall health improvements.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUDIOLOGISTS

For best results with a hearing aid, seek a certified audiologist who uses advanced

technology to fine tune the hearing aids to your exact needs. An audiologist has many advantages over hearing aid sellers, including those individuals working at "big box" stores, and can make a real difference in hearing improvement.

An audiologist has to have at least four years of undergraduate schooling with a major in hearing and communication science, and four years of graduate training for a doctoral degree in audiology. In contrast, a hearing aid seller in this state needs only a high school education and one-year of on-the-job training.

Other advantages to visiting an audiologist is that he or she is licensed to identify medical issues pertaining to the hearing system and do some procedures for patients such as remove excess ear wax. Hearing instrument dealers can sell their products but cannot provide this kind of medical assistance. Thus, a comprehensive, safe, and expertly tailored hearing solution

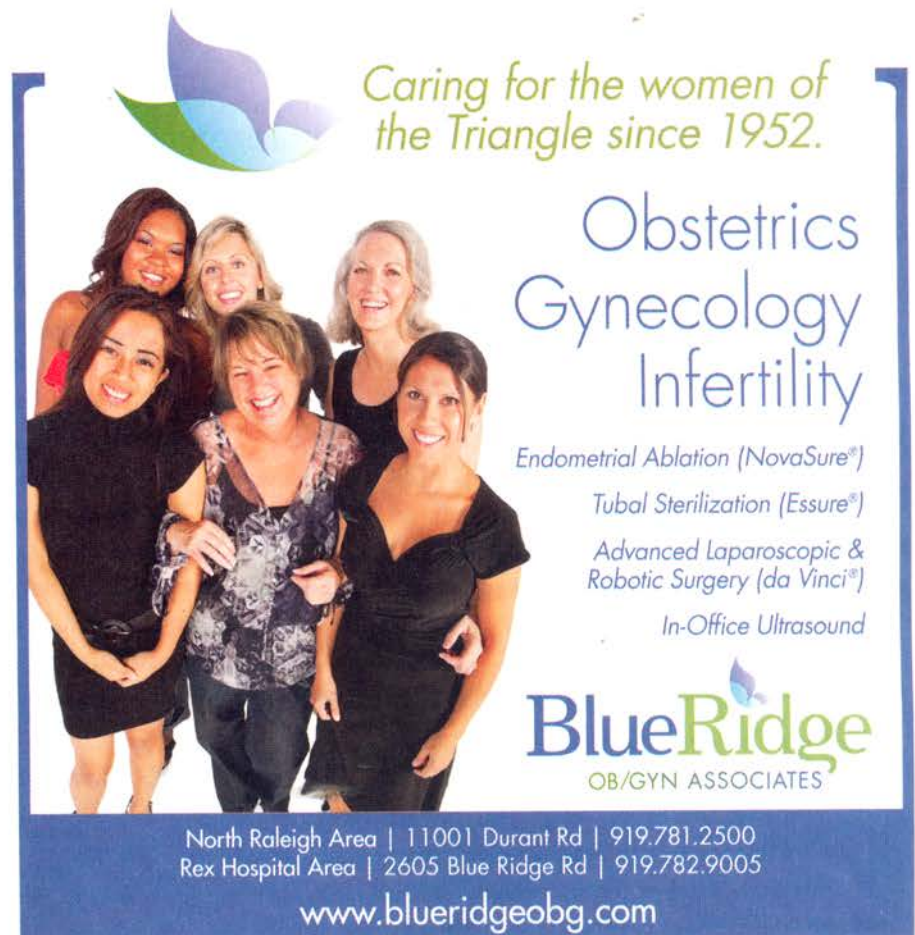
with an audiologist works best in seeing positive results for hearing.

TAKE ACTION NOW

Given the importance hearing has in our lives, it makes sense to take control of the situation and resolve these problems immediately. In fact, technology can address 90% of hearing issues painlessly.

Philosopher Immanuel Kant once said, "Not to see disconnects us from things. Not to hear disconnects us from people." The opportunity exists now to make those crucial connections along with very important improvements to your quality of life and your health at an affordable price. Don't suffer unnecessarily – see a trained audiologist and restore your hearing, so you can be an active part of the conversation with family and friends. ■

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