

27 October 2021

**To hear for life,
listen with care!**



Currently **one in six** Australians suffer from some form of hearing loss. This may increase to one in four by 2050. Access Economics 2006

World Hearing Day 2022 announced

World Hearing Day will be observed on 3 March 2022 with the theme "To hear for life, listen with care." Through this theme, we can all will focus on the importance of safe listening as a means of maintaining good hearing throughout our lives.

Over-the-counter hearing aids are a thing in the United States

If you have mild hearing loss and are holding back because of the cost of hearing aids, over the counter hearing aids will be low-cost and will give you a taste of better hearing. What are my chances of being satisfied with an OTC hearing aid? Most research indicates that people who've tried out OTC hearing aids need the help of a knowledgeable hearing care provider.

India introduces sign language at school

As part of a new national education policy, the government's decision to introduce Indian Sign Language in the school curriculum will improve accessibility and create awareness.

Malala Fund and Cochlear partnership

"My hope is that all girls can have equal opportunities and that we ensure a world where every girl can have access to free, safe and quality education."

Why are harsh sounds unbearable?

Grating noises such as car alarms, the sounds of a construction site, or even human screams are very difficult if not impossible to ignore, chiefly because they are unpleasant. What happens in our brains when we hear such noises and why do we find them so intolerable?

Deafness Forum of Australia is the peak national body representing the views and interests of all Australians who live with hearing loss, people who have an ear or balance disorders, and the families that support them. Our mission is to make hearing health & wellbeing a national priority in Australia.

Drop the Jargon – focus on clear communication

Communicating with health professionals and researchers is even harder during the COVID-19 pandemic. Wearing face masks or using telehealth is challenging, but can be much harder where there are language or cultural barriers, or where people have hearing loss, visual impairment, or lower health literacy.



What can be done?

One barrier to understanding is the use of complex medical terms, or “jargon”. Clinicians and researchers can make it easier for everyone to ‘get’ what we are telling them.

Here are Monash University’s top tips for language usage and comprehension checking:

- Use plain language wherever you can. Introducing medical terms is fine, just explain what you mean by them.
- Confirm that the patient has understood by using [teach-back](#) – asking them to explain back the information in their own words so you are clear they have understood.
- Have Explanatory Statements or other patient-facing materials checked over by a consumer.
- Chunk and Check. Give information in bite-sized pieces and give people time to digest it.
- Write things down in action-orientated terms. Generic medical pamphlets don’t work for most people, so jot down the most important things that a patient has to do.
- Encourage patients to bring someone with them to appointments.

Many patients also struggle to comprehend or remember information given to them by health professionals. In one study, almost 80% of emergency department patients didn’t understand the information they were given, while in others, up to 50% of health information was not remembered correctly by patients, and fewer than half could recall medication changes after discharge.

From Monash University [Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences](#)

New app improves communication

Mask wearing and physical distancing in a COVID-19 world can make communication challenging, particularly for people with hearing loss who have difficulty understanding speech.

The National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) has tackled this problem by developing the *NALscribe* iPad app that clinics can use to make communication easier for people struggling to hear. The app has been made free for hearing healthcare clinics, organisations and individuals around the world.

The *NALscribe* app created by NAL, the research division of Hearing Australia, quickly and continuously transcribes speech into large, easy-to-read text on an iPad screen in real time.

Dr Brent Edwards, Director of NAL, says the *NALscribe* app is designed to help improve communication for people with hearing loss, particularly when there are additional barriers such as when masks are worn.

"It's free and available worldwide so that people across the globe who are living with hearing loss can benefit from this solution," Dr Edwards said.

The app has been trialled in hearing clinics across Australia, at service counters and during appointments, and the feedback from clients has been positive. Hearing Australia client, Michelle Farina, aged 59 years, used the app at her recent appointment.

"This would also be useful during appointments where a professional person is unable to remove their mask (due to COVID-19) to enable a person with hearing disability to lip read. I went to hospital recently and the medical staff were not able to remove their masks and live captioning on a tablet was not available. As a result, they had to painstakingly write down all the questions they needed to ask me," said Michelle.

While the app is designed for and was tested in hearing care clinics, it may prove to be a useful communication tool in other businesses such as medical centres and aged care facilities.

Hearing Australia Audiologist Emma Church said the app made conversations during appointments much easier for clients, particularly those who are not yet wearing hearing aids.

"And for those who may not speak English as their first language, the app has been useful in helping them to better understand what we're asking them," said Emma.

Features of the new *NALscribe* app include:

- an inclusive design that supports customisable settings such as the text size, screen clearing privacy options and dark/light appearance
- 11 language options: English (Australia), English (US, UK, Canada), French, Spanish, Arabic, German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin), Korean, Portuguese, Russian
- offline speech recognition mode for increased data privacy and can be used anywhere
- adherence to accessibility guidelines to improve usability for the elderly and people with disability
- transcriptions can be saved, edited and easily shared via other platforms
- translation of captions (*iOS 15 required)

The *NALscribe* app is available for iPhone and iPad and free to download via the App Store.



[Temma Ehrenfeld](#) writes for [Hearing Healthy](#)

If you have mild hearing loss and are holding back because of the cost of hearing aids, over the counter (OTC) hearing aids will be low-cost and will give you a taste of better hearing.

If you have trouble hearing conversations even in quiet settings or miss loud sounds like cars honking when you drive or announcements in public buildings, your hearing loss is more severe than OTC hearing aids are designed to address, notes the [National Institutes of Health](#). Learn more about the [degrees of hearing loss](#).

You need to see a doctor quickly if you have a sudden hearing loss, sudden plunge in your hearing (even if it improves), a big difference between one ear and the other, or tinnitus (ringing) in only one ear. These are possible signs of a medical problem.

What are my chances of being satisfied with an OTC hearing aid?

It's hard to say, but most research indicates that people who've tried out OTC hearing aids need the help of a knowledgeable hearing care provider. A small 2017 trial provides some clues. It tested the outcome when adults aged 55 to 79 years with mild-to-moderate hearing loss chose among three pre-programmed hearing aids on their own for both ears. These were high-end digital mini-behind-the-ear aids, one of several common hearing aid styles.

Catherine Palmer, director of Audiology at the University of Pittsburgh said a large majority—90 percent of participants—tried more than one hearing aid. But close to three-quarters picked the wrong aids based on their audiograms. In addition, although they saw a video and received handouts, 20 percent asked for extra help using the aids.

The volunteers paid for their aids upfront and could get their money back if they chose to return their aids. The results: 55 percent wanted to keep them.

Ongoing hearing care is key

Your chances of satisfaction are higher if you receive a hearing aid fitted by a hearing instrument specialists or audiologist: In this study, a comparison group were fitted by audiologists and 81 percent of the volunteers wanted to keep their aids.

An additional wrinkle: The researchers gave everyone who didn't want their aids a chance to work with an audiologist and wear the results over the next month. Of 10 people who had chosen among

pre-programmed aids on their own who took that option, six did decide to keep their aids after working with an audiologist.

As I write, we don't know yet what your options will be when buying OTC aids in real life. This study suggests that for a better-than-even chance of satisfaction you will need the option to try different aids and help using your aids. Even so, your chances of getting hearing devices truly appropriate for your hearing loss are small, much lower than they would be if you work with an audiologist.

Your chances of getting OTC hearing aids that are truly appropriate for your hearing loss are small, much lower than they would be if you work with an audiologist.

In addition, a full-service audiologist can advise you about a variety of other devices that stream audio. If you have age-related vision loss, the choices are fairly simple: you can pick glasses and adjust the magnification and lighting on electronic devices. For hearing loss, there are many other options, including hearing aids, cochlear implants and assistive listening devices.

Even where hearing aids are free, many people don't wear them

Price may not be the real reason you haven't bought an aid. In Australia, Iceland and Germany public funding makes hearing aids free for many - yet many eligible people with significant hearing loss don't wear hearing aids.

In my own family, people who paid thousands for hearing aids don't wear them, ignoring all complaints. When asked why they don't wear hearing aids, people tend to say that the aids aren't comfortable or didn't give them natural hearing.

As someone who has worn hearing aids for decades, I see those reasons as a sign you didn't give hearing aids a chance. They aren't comfortable - if you're not used to them. There is an adjustment period. They also don't give you "natural" hearing - but good natural hearing is beyond my reach. My choices are bad hearing or slightly artificial-sounding better hearing.

Things to keep in mind

Is your spouse or an adult child bugging you to get a hearing aid (or wear the one you have)? Close family members can be hurt and angry that you don't value conversations with them enough to solve the problem. When you choose bad hearing—while other people are complaining—don't be surprised if they think you're selfish. On the other hand, if you demonstrate you care, you might be surprised by their gratitude.

Do you find your grandkids squeaky and impossible to understand? You'd have more fun in their company if you could chat with them if you treat your high-frequency hearing loss. Are you unable to participate in business meetings? Parties? Dinners at a long table? Those are all strong reasons to take action before your hearing declines further. If cost is truly the issue, watch the news: OTC hearing aids could be in-between step, or a life-changer, on your path to healthy hearing.

What about cheap hearing aids I'm finding online?

If you've browsed online shopping sites, you've likely come across hearing aids that cost little more than a meal at a fancy restaurant. Be warned that these are likely not true hearing aids, but are "hearing amplifiers," and they are not intended for use by people with hearing loss.

World Hearing Day | 3 March 2022



To hear for life, listen with care!



**Hearing loss due to loud
sounds can be prevented**

#worldhearingday



Make Listening Safe

Announcement:

World Hearing Day will be observed on 3 March 2022 with the theme,

“To hear for life, listen with care”

Through this theme, we can all will focus on the importance of safe listening as a means of maintaining good hearing across the life course as recommended in the World report on hearing.

Keep visiting [our website](#) for updates and resources.

DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

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Why are harsh sounds so unbearable for the human brain?



Digital Vision/Getty Images

Many people find harsh noises, such as those that car alarms make, difficult to bear. New research looks at what happens in the brain during exposure to these auditory stimuli.

Grating noises such as car alarms, the sounds of a construction site, or even human screams are very difficult if not impossible to ignore, chiefly because they are unpleasant.

What happens in our brains when we hear such noises, though, and why do we find them so unbearable?

These are the questions that a team of researchers from the University of Geneva and Geneva University Hospitals in Switzerland has aimed to answer in a recent study.

In their study, the researchers first established the range of sounds that are “rough” and unpleasant for the human brain. They then looked at the brain areas that these noises activate.

For some of these experiments, the researchers played the participants repetitive sounds with frequencies between 0 and 250 hertz. They also played these sounds at progressively shorter intervals to determine the point at which some of these sounds became unpleasant.

“We asked participants when they perceived the sounds as being rough (distinct from each other) and when they perceived them as smooth (forming one continuous and single sound),” explains researcher Luc Arnal.

The sounds considered intolerable were in the range of frequencies used by alarms and human screams, including those of a baby,” notes Arnal.

These unpleasant sounds are those that humans can perceive from a distance - the ones that really grab our attention. “That’s why alarms use these rapid repetitive frequencies to maximise the chances that they are detected and gain our attention.”

When the auditive stimuli repeat more often than every 25 milliseconds or so, the researchers explain, the human brain becomes unable to anticipate the different stimuli and perceives them as a continuous noise that it cannot ignore.

From [Medical News Today](#)

Deaf cricket games on hold due to COVID, but 2022 looks brighter

By [Paul Kennedy](#) for [ABC News](#)



The Australian deaf cricket team did not reach the semi finals of the last World Cup in India. (Cricket Australia: Luke Williams)

The 2018 Deaf T20 World Cup in India seems a lifetime ago. Australia's team missed the final; they've been waiting to play again but COVID has prevented all international competition.

With lockdowns due to finish this year, Cricket Australia has begun scheduling a return to play for disabled squads through a 'satellite coaching program' and training camps. The National Inclusion Cricket Championships (Deaf, Blind, and Intellectually Disabled) have been pencilled in for next April in Geelong, with squads chosen from that tournament to take part in some international matches in Darwin during winter 2022.

The basic rule around eligibility is that if you require a hearing aid you probably qualify. The technical benchmark is 55 decibels — a quiet conversation without other distractions comes in at about 50 decibels.

Communication within deaf teams varies. Some players use Auslan, others talk and sign, and some talk.

Hearing aids are banned during games, so all cricketers are on a level playing field.

Appealing for caught behind is a significant difference between deaf and other cricket games.

"When they beat the bat," coach Jason Mathers says, "they're genuinely asking the question, "Is that out?', and the umpire says 'yes' or 'no' and they just continue on. There's no hysterics."



Zac King went from bowling for Flinders in Victoria, to representing Australia. *(Luke Williams: Cricket Australia)*

There is currently no Australian deaf team for women. Cricket Australia is now organising state teams for deaf women and is aiming to have a national women's squad as soon as possible.

The next deaf World Cup will be a 50-over tournament in Dubai. Hopefully, the Australian team will be there.



The Disability Gateway can help you to find out about employment, housing, day to day activities, transport and more. Visit www.disabilitygateway.gov.au

India introduces sign language in school curricula

By Shuriah Niazi writing for [Anadolu Agency](#)



NEW DELHI

Even as according to official figures just 5% of hearing-impaired children get basic schooling in India, the government's decision to include sign language as part of the school curriculum has been hailed by experts.

According to the 2011 census, there were 5.07 million hearing-impaired students in India, and out of them, just 1% had the access to quality education.

Experts say the government's decision to introduce Indian Sign Language (ISL) in the school curriculum will improve accessibility and create awareness.

As part of a new national education policy, the government has designated the ISL a subject now.

"Students can opt to study this. It will promote Indian Sign Language and will help differently-abled people," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while unveiling the new policy. He also released an ISL dictionary of 10,000 words.

"For a long time, sign languages of persons with hearing disability were not considered a real language. However, with research in the field of linguistics, it has been established that sign language of the persons with a hearing disability are complex grammatical languages which developed naturally when people with hearing disability came together," said Sharita Sharma, assistant professor in the Department of Linguistics at the Central University of Rajasthan.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency, Sharma, who was also a member of the committee that devised the new education policy, said the sign languages have their grammar and are highly creative.

"Anything communicated in spoken language can be communicated in sign language also. They can be used to teach mathematics, written language, science, and any technical subject. Sign languages all around the world are not the same as there is no universal sign language," she said.

Tips for maintaining well-being in an audiology clinic

Judith Vonberg writing for [Ida Institute](#)

Burnout is a word we're hearing more and more across industries and around the world. But do you know what it means and what you can do to reduce your workplace stress?



According to Dr Dunay Schmulian, Director of Audiology at Metro South Health in Brisbane, there are several types of stress and struggle that can be tackled – and prevented – by hearing care professionals themselves.

There's compassion fatigue: the profound emotional and physical exhaustion that professionals and caregivers can develop over the course of their careers.

Or vicarious trauma: when a professional's fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged after working with clients who have experienced trauma.

These can be serious, and if you think you are already suffering from one of them, do seek professional help. Otherwise, there are simple tools that can help prevent you from experiencing compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma – and the stress, exhaustion, and anger that often come with them. Here are some of the tools Dr Schmulian recommends.

There are many aspects to wellness, including social, spiritual, environmental, emotional, intellectual, and physical. You can create your own wellness wheel with the aspects that are most important and relevant to you, and decide on a specific goal for each, e.g. "I want to consistently add exercise to my life." Give yourself a time period to achieve these – and check back in regularly.

Empathy is a key element in delivering person-centered care. However, when unchecked or unconscious, it can impact us emotionally and physically – and this can happen easily. When actively listening to a client, you may start mirroring their posture or facial expression, and therefore start unconsciously empathising with their physical and emotional state. It's important to break this habit, which you can do by paying attention to your own posture, expression, and breathing during clinical encounters, and consciously un-mirroring. You can sit up straight, cross or uncross your legs, change your breathing (usually by slowing it down), take a drink of water, or perform a subtle stretch.

Stress and fatigue manifest differently in different people. It's important for professionals to recognise the physical, psychological, and behavioural symptoms in themselves. Behavioural symptoms could include forgetfulness, irritability, missing work, or problems in personal relationships.

None of these on their own indicate a serious problem but a combination might. For each symptom, ask yourself when you last experienced it, how severe it was, why you think it happens, what strategy you have for dealing with it, and, importantly, what an early warning sign looks like.

Take a look at the [Ida Institute](#) University Course module on clinician well-being for more information.

Global partnership to remove hearing loss as a barrier to education

Malala Yousafzai spoke out for girls' education after the Taliban banned girls from going to school in her hometown. She co-founded Malala Fund with her father. Malala received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her efforts to see every girl complete 12 years of free, safe, quality education.



Malala Fund and Cochlear Foundation have partnered to raise awareness about the barriers keeping millions of children with hearing loss from accessing quality education.

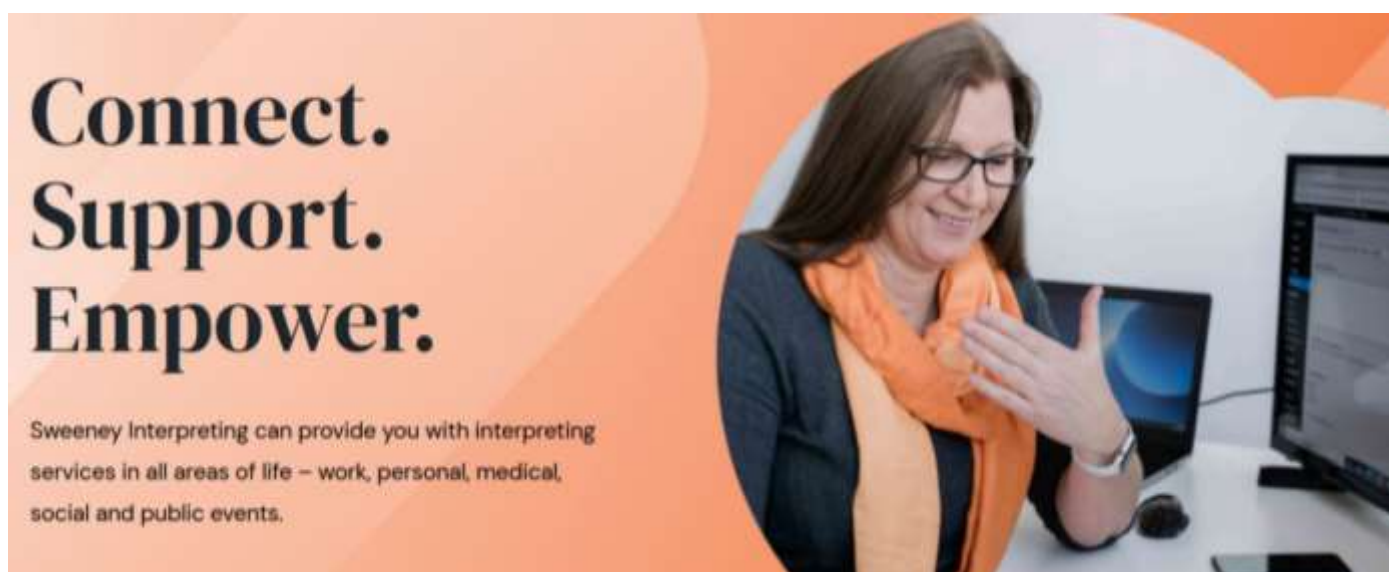
"My hope is that all girls can have equal opportunities and that we ensure a world where every girl can have access to free, safe and quality education," said Malala Yousafzai.

If children with hearing loss do not receive hearing healthcare and support early, they often experience lower school performance, higher risk of dropping out of school, and less likelihood of accessing higher education. Ultimately, this can impact their lifelong career prospects. The problem is exacerbated in many parts of the world where millions of children, especially girls already face significant barriers to education.

Malala Fund and Cochlear Foundation are inviting children and young people with hearing loss to share their stories of personal achievement as part of the '*Achieve anything program.*' This new program will highlight and publicly recognise their real-world experiences of hearing loss to promote their equal rights to an education and early access to hearing healthcare and support.

Visit www.cochlearfoundation.org

Advertisement

An advertisement for Sweeney Interpreting. On the left, the text reads: "Connect. Support. Empower." Below this, it says: "Sweeney Interpreting can provide you with interpreting services in all areas of life – work, personal, medical, social and public events." On the right, there is a photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing glasses, a dark blazer, and a bright orange scarf. She is smiling and gesturing with her hands as if speaking or interpreting. In the background, there are computer monitors on a desk.

Auslan storytelling videos



The Hunters Writers Centre has produced a series of Auslan Storytelling videos of different children's books. They are all free and can be found [here](#)

Annual General Meeting

Dear members,

This is to advise you of the upcoming Annual General Meeting of the members of Deafness Forum of Australia - Wednesday 24 November 2021, 3.00pm AEDT as a webcast.

At the meeting, members will have the opportunity to:

- find out and ask questions about Deafness Forum's operations and finances and other items on the agenda
- vote on any resolutions proposed

Members will be asked to vote to:

- accept the minutes of the last annual general meeting
- accept the annual report, auditor's report, and the annual financial statements
- appoint and pay an auditor
- appoint directors

[Take this link](#) to find the documents for the meeting; and to register to attend or if you can't make it, to appoint your proxy.

Know someone who deserves their own copy of One in Six?

Drop us a line: hello@deafnessforum.org.au

Contact us to receive this publication in an alternative file type.



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