

Heard It
Through
The Grapevine
Audiology, PC

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Say No to Hearing Loss with Folates – Part 2

Part 2 of a 2-part series about health and hearing loss

Your hearing mechanism, located deep inside the skull, is very delicate and complicated, and if any part of that mechanism – from ear drum to cochlea – is damaged, the result is hearing loss. That’s why hearing professionals recommend wearing ear protection when exposed to loud noise and to unplug the MP3 player once in awhile to allow for some quiet time.

Hearing loss is a fairly standard part of the aging process because the hearing mechanism wears out as we age. But here’s the thing: if we live a healthier lifestyle today, we’ll hear better tomorrow and could potentially slow down the effects of aging. Specifically, if we eat a better diet and live a heart-healthy lifestyle, we’ll hear better longer. And it’s not that hard to do.

When the ears are exposed to loud noise – especially loud noise over a long time – the inner ear begins to produce little molecules called free radicals. These molecules occur naturally, usually when the body is damaged or stressed. A cut or a nicked finger, for example, produces free radicals. So does loud music. That’s one reason your ears ring when you leave a rock concert. Too much noise. Too much volume. Too many free radicals.

These free radicals damage the delicate hearing mechanism and you lose your ability to hear over time. In most cases, hearing loss is so gradual that you don’t even notice it, but there’s less and less hearing going on every day.

Anti-Oxidants, Folates and Free Radicals

Free radicals are bad for your health. Simple.

So, how do you fight these naturally-occurring molecules that damage the body at the cellular level? One thing doctors recommend is to eat foods high in anti-oxidants – especially foods rich in folates.

What’s a folate? It’s a nutrient found in some of the foods we eat.

Specifically, folate is a water-soluble member of the B vitamin family. If you take a vitamin supplement, you might see the ingredient, folic acid, on the ingredients label. Folic acid is the synthetic version of folate and, as far as the body is concerned, it doesn’t know the difference between folic acid and organic or natural folate. Both put up a daily fight against the free radicals produced by stress on the body.

Anti-oxidants, like folates, fight free radicals. So, the better your diet, the more folate you consume. In turn, more folate is available to fight those free radicals that are responsible for the aging process and, yes, hearing loss.

A recent study was presented at the 2009 American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation (AAO-HNSF) Annual Meeting. The study found that men over the age of 60, who have a high intake of foods and supplements high in folates, have a 20 percent decrease in risk of developing hearing loss. 20 percent! That’s a significant finding and the authors report this is the largest study to examine the beneficial relationship between folates and hearing loss.

Good Foods and Nutritional Supplements For the Ears

If you take a nutritional supplement (a vitamin pill) each day, check the label. Look for the ingredient folic acid. If the supplement provides 100% of the minimum daily requirement (MDR) of folic acid, you’re covered. But that doesn’t mean that you should count on your vitamin each day to keep you healthy. A healthy diet also provides folates to fight off free radicals damaging your hearing.

So what foods are high in folates? There are lots and at least some of them are foods you like to eat:

Food	MDR of folates
Cooked spinach 1/2 cup	25%
Cooked asparagus 4 spears	20%
Vegetarian baked beans	15%
Raw spinach	15%
Enriched egg noodles	15%
Avocado 1/2 cup sliced	10%
Dry roasted peanuts 1 oz	10%
Orange juice 3/4 cup	10%
Banana 1 medium	6%

Other foods that are rich in folates include broccoli, beans and peas, beef liver, and eggs.

It's not just about heart health, though there's no doubt a healthy heart is critical to good health (and actually for healthy hearing). But so is the ability to hear. Your ability to hear enables you to interact with others. Your ears provide spatial orientation – your place in the space you occupy, whether it's a crowded elevator or the quiet of the woods in winter. Your ears, your ability to hear, enable you to orient yourself in whatever space you occupy at the moment. Spatial orientation also keeps you safe from danger – like a speeding car.

And there are the little things – the ability to enjoy music and dancing, the ability to enjoy the sounds of summer twittering in the trees, the ability to hear directions on the job – all of these contribute to a richer, fuller, more meaningful life.

So eat better for all the right reasons. Sure, it's about a healthy heart, strong bones and muscles, but it's also about your ability to hear better longer.

It's true: you are what you eat. It's also a fact that you hear what you eat. So, the better you eat, the better your diet, the better chance (20% better chance) you'll be able to hear in the years ahead.

Like mom always said, "Eat your folates!"
www.healthyhearing.com, January 25, 2010

Spreading The Word About Hearing Loss

Heard It Through The Grapevine Audiology sponsored a booth at the City of Grapevine Employee Health Fair on Friday, May 7. The event was held at the Grapevine Convention Center in Grapevine. Dozens of visitors came by the HTGA booth to learn more about hearing tests and the latest in hearing aid technology. Two lucky winners, Scott Cameron and Jennifer Hibbs, won Barnes & Noble and iTunes gift cards in the free drawing.



Dr. Wheeler prepares the booth at the City of Grapevine Employee Health Fair.

HEARING LOSS SUPPORT GROUPS

Hearing Loss Association of America

Local chapters within DFW metroplex

www.hearingloss.org/chapters

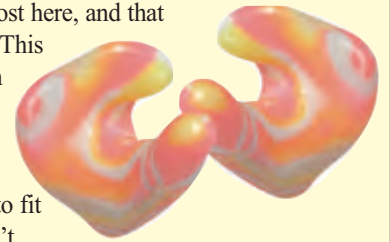
SayWhatClub (SWC)

Non-profit internet based organization run by volunteers for people with hearing loss or interested in hearing loss issues.

www.saywhatclub.com

10% Discount on all Swim Molds and myBuds

School's out, summer is almost here, and that means one thing – vacation! This season protect your ears with custom swim earmolds or iPod™ earbuds. These made-to-fit earmolds from Westone are custom crafted to fit your ears precisely. You won't believe the long-wearing comfort and superior sound quality that only a custom fit can provide.



Swim earmolds – originally \$90, only \$81
myBuds earmolds for iPods™ - originally \$150, only \$135
Prices good through 7/31/10

Laughter... The Best Medicine

A police car with its lights flashing and siren wailing pulls up behind a man who is driving too fast and also hard of hearing. The man doesn't see the lights flashing because his car is loaded with suitcases and clothes for his trip. The officer finally pulls him over by driving alongside and motioning to him.

"Didn't you see my lights?" the officer sternly asks.

"I'm sorry, there's so much stuff in back, I couldn't see."

"Then how about my siren? You didn't hear my siren?"

"No, I'm hard of hearing."

"Well, maybe you ought to get a hearing aid if you're going to drive so fast."

"Naah," the man replied. "Tickets are cheaper."

Meet Our Staff



Tara Wheeler, Au.D. – Dr. Wheeler received her Doctorate of Audiology from the University of Texas at Dallas. She resides in Grapevine with her husband and daughter. Dr. Wheeler enjoys knitting and traveling in her spare time.



Margie Swoyer, Business Manager – Margie received her B.S. degree in Industrial Administration from Iowa State University in Ames. She lives in Southlake with her husband and two teenage sons. Margie enjoys reading and sewing.