

Flatirons AUDIO SCOOP

Winter 2012



What is Hyperacusis?

Hyperacusis is a condition characterized by over-sensitivity to sound and sound levels that are normal to others. Someone with severe hyperacusis has a reduced range of sound tolerance and experiences difficulty with moderate everyday sounds. These individuals sense some sounds to be too loud and uncomfortable, while those with normal hearing sense those same sounds to have reasonable levels of loudness. Patients with tinnitus often experience some sensation of hyperacusis.

Hyperacusis can be acquired as a result of damage sustained to the inner ear. Research suggests that impairment to the auditory nerve may also be a culprit. In cases not involving trauma to the inner ear, hyperacusis may be acquired as a result of damage to the brain or the neurological system. In these cases, hyperacusis can be defined as a cerebral processing problem specific to how the brain perceives sound. In rare cases, hyperacusis may be caused by a vestibular disorder and can cause problems with balance. From a neurological standpoint, hyperacusis occurs when the volume

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Managing Tinnitus During Holiday Travel

If you suffer with tinnitus and are planning to fly during the upcoming holidays we have some tips for you.



Flying on an airplane rarely causes tinnitus. Since aircraft cabins are pressurized, there are few cases of ear damage due to pressure changes (barotrauma), as might be found in activities like scuba diving. The noise in airplanes, however, can be a factor in exacerbating tinnitus. The quietest places in airplanes are in front of the wing engines, at the aisle seats, away from doors, galleys and bathrooms.

Noise cancellation headsets can also help cut out low-frequency noise common to aircraft. Earplugs may also help - foam earplugs are recommended because they allow the air pressure to change slowly during

flight. Other kinds of earplugs that allow for gradual pressure change may also help, but not pre-molded, airtight ones. If pressure in the ears is an issue for you and you want to wear earplugs while flying, it is advised to insert the earplugs before you board the plane, remove them when the plane reaches cruising altitude, and then replace them before descent. If you choose, you may leave the earplugs in for the entire flight. Also, keep them in for approximately 30 minutes after landing.

Patients with upper respiratory illnesses may experience middle ear infections following air travel, and this could also negatively affect or cause tinnitus. If you must fly while ill, you may choose to use a decongestant prior to flight. *Check with a doctor before taking any medications.*

Finally, if pressure change is a problem during flight, follow these simple steps to help to relieve the pressure on the Eustachian tube:

- **Swallowing, yawning, eating, chewing gum or drinking activates the muscles that open the Eustachian tube.**

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Providing you with a comfortable, personalized experience and the best hearing health care available.

How the Cookie Crumbles

Dr. Julie's Decadent Sugar Cookies

Are the cookies in our office really home made and freshly baked? Yes! Dr. Julie makes cookie dough at home, freezes the dough in cookie-sized balls and we bake a fresh batch every morning. Everyone's favorite is Dr. Julie's Heath Bar spin on sugar cookies. Yum!

- 1 cup margarine
- 2 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup oil
- 1¼ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 5 cups flour
- 2 tsp. soda
- 2 tsp. cream of tartar
- Health bar bits



Cream butter, sugar, add eggs, oil, salt and vanilla. Add flour, soda and cream of tartar. Mix until smooth. Roll into small balls and drop into sugar.

Place on cookie sheet and press down. Bake 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Make about 10 dozen. **Now you know our secret!**

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Managing Tinnitus During Holiday Travel *Continued...*

- **Avoid sleep; that way you can swallow enough to keep up with any pressure changes.**
- **Try the Valsalva Maneuver: Gently blow air out through the nostrils while pinching your nose and closing your mouth. It is very important not to force air from your chest or diaphragm, but only to use throat and cheek muscles.**
- **If a feeling of fullness or pain in your ears persists after flying, seek the aid of a physician experienced in ear disorders.**

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& The American Tinnitus Association

Increase Your Earning Potential in 2013

Is Hearing Loss Affecting Your Bottom Line?

According to the Better Hearing Institute, even a mild hearing loss can equate to loss of income. However their statistics also show that those who wear hearing aids communicate better and bridge the income gap significantly:

- **People with untreated hearing loss lose as much as \$30,000 in income annually, depending on their degree of hearing loss.**
- **The loss in income for people with untreated hearing loss due to underemployment is estimated at \$176 billion annually.**
- **The annual cost to society is estimated to be as high as \$26 billion in unrealized federal taxes.**
- **Use of hearing aids was shown to reduce the risk of income loss by 90%-100% for those with milder hearing loss, and from 65%-77% for those with severe to moderate hearing loss.**
- **People with hearing loss, who do not use hearing aids, are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as their peers who use hearing aids.**



Better Hearing Institute

Do You Have Hearing Loss?

Over 38 Million people in the United States have hearing loss and untreated hearing loss can result in social isolation as well as a many other problems. Do you or someone you know experience any of the following?

Let's Find Out

- ***Do you have difficulty understanding what is being said unless you are directly facing the speaker?***
- ***Do you find yourself complaining that people are mumbling or slurring their words?***
- ***Are you continually asking people to repeat words or phrases, though they feel they're speaking loud enough?***
- ***Do you prefer the radio or television louder than others do?***
- ***Do you have difficulty understanding conversations on the phone?***
- ***Do you have difficulty understanding conversations in a group of people?***
- ***Do you avoid gatherings where listening may be difficult?***
- ***Do you have trouble hearing at the movies, your house of worship or in a concert hall where sounds may be at a distance?***
- ***Do you have difficulty hearing in noisy restaurants?***
- ***Do you understand men better than women?***

- ***Do you have ringing in your ears or other buzzing or humming noises?***
- ***Are you, or have you been exposed to loud noise on a daily basis?***

If you answered yes to even two of these questions, you may have hearing loss and be missing out on a big part of life. Call to schedule your annual hearing exam today.



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Musician Hearing Protection

Professional musicians work in a high decibel environment in which hearing loss, tinnitus and hypersensitivity to sounds and sound distortion can result.

Traditional earplugs will not work for the professional musician, as they reduce sound by muffling low to mid-range frequencies. Special musician ear molds are available at Flatirons Audiology that can protect the musician's ears from loud sounds without distorting what they hear. Many of these devices will even enhance the music experience.

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Tinnitus Tidbit

Fictional Book About a Woman with Tinnitus

Based on Real Life Events and Endorsed by American Tinnitus Association Board Member Scott C. Mitchell, J.D.

The book: **Shattered** by Authors Cheryl Bolden, Kevin Hogan & Janet Snyder

A quote by Scott Mitchell: *"This novel Shattered is a first rate psychological thriller that portrays the anguish of dealing with intrusive tinnitus. I could not put it down."*

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What is Hyperacusis? *Continued...*

of a sound is miscoded by neurons prior to being interpreted by the brain. The origins of hyperacusis may also be psychological in some cases. Hyperacusis can occur with or without hearing loss. For most patients, the direct cause of the hyperacusis is often ambiguous, however, there are several medical issues that are known to cause sound sensitivities. These might include hearing loss, acoustic trauma, autism, epilepsy, neoplasm, schizophrenia, tinnitus, Bell's palsy, Lyme disease, Williams Syndrome, Ramsay Hunt Syndrome, perilymphatic fistula, head injury, migraine, and depression. Individuals with hyperacusis may experience side effects ranging from annoyance

all the way to significant ear pain. They may even find it difficult to attend events with moderate sounds such as dinners, parties, and other social events. For many individuals, this can mean limiting participation in some activities, disrupting enjoyment of life.

There are solutions available for treating hyperacusis. The main goal of treatment is to increase sound tolerance in a manner that is steady and comfortable. Contact Flatirons Audiology to schedule an appointment to discuss the wide range of treatment options available to increase your sound tolerance in the presence of everyday sounds.

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