



# Hear the News!!!

Meridian

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## Hearing:

*How does it work and what happens when it goes wrong?*

We all know that hearing is one of the 5 senses and a very important part of our lives. Without our hearing; talking, listening, and participating in life become really difficult. Our hearing can have a profound impact on our relationships with others – our spouses, friends, and children. How does the ear work? There are 3 parts to the ear: outer, middle and inner. Sound waves enter the ear and hit the eardrum. The eardrum vibrates the 3 bones of the middle ear: the malleus, incus and stapes (also called the hammer, anvil and stirrup). When the sound wave reaches the inner ear, nerve endings (hair cells) are stimulated and send the signal to the brain.

With a hearing loss, typically (90%) of the damage is in the inner ear. If the sound is not ‘recognized’ by the hair cells or the nerve, it will not make it to the brain. The sounds that typically are missing first are the high-pitched sounds like /s, sh, t, f, and ch/.

These sounds are in almost every word we speak, so they are really important. Without hearing them clearly, words seem mumbled and misunderstandings happen.

A survey of 2300 adults done in 1999 by the National Council on Aging found that people who wore hearing aids reported improvements in many areas of their lives – so did their families and friends. Families want their loved ones to hear, but sometimes family members expect a lot. Hearing aids will not repair damaged areas of the ear. Using hearing aids is one strategy to hear better; but using other strategies such as getting the listener’s attention before speaking, looking at the speaker, keeping light on the speaker’s face, and reducing background noise are also really important. Using assistive listening devices for the phone or the TV can be really helpful too. You won’t hear like you did when you were 10, but hearing aids make listening less stressful.

### *A Little Story from Do you Hear Me? Pub: Harris Communications*

*A gas station owner had needed a hearing aid for much too long, but he kept putting it off. One day he was standing in his station when an attractive woman in a convertible drove in. He made it a point to take care of her before his employee could.*

*After he filled her tank, cleaned her windshield, and checked her oil, he thought she asked if he had a whisk broom. “No,” he replied, “but I do have a vacuum cleaner; we can clean you out with that.”*

*The woman got a furious look on her face and zoomed out of the driveway. The owner, looking around in confusion, saw his employee rolling on the ground laughing. “Oh man!” the employee howled, “I don’t know what you thought she said, but she asked for a **restroom!**”*



### Healthy Hearing Fact:

Hearing loss affects 10% of the population and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common chronic health condition in the US.

**BPPV:** This is the shortened name for *benign paroxysmal positioning vertigo*.

It is the most treatable disorder involving balance with an 80-90% cure rate.



- Women tend to get it more often than men.
- It occurs more often in the right ear.
- Most of the time, the posterior semicircular canal is affected, one of three canals in the ear which control circular head movement.

BPPV occurs when particles from the inner ear dislodge and float into a part of the ear they don't belong. This can happen due to head injury, infections, or often, the cause is unknown. The symptoms for BPPV include: spinning, dizziness, nausea, imbalance and lightheadedness. Activities that can cause these symptoms are lying down, rolling over, sitting up, bending over or looking up. A Vestibular Physical Therapist (PT) can perform a repositioning maneuver to alleviate many of these symptoms. The PT will have you turn your head, and lie down with your eyes open to observe your eye movements. These eye movements provide information about where the problem is and the treatment required. The PT will roll your head and body in a specific movement in order to move the particles back to where they belong and there is typically immediate relief from symptoms. One to two treatments by the Physical Therapist often will clear the problem if it is BPPV. There are other conditions which can cause many of these symptoms so it is important to have your dizziness evaluated by an experienced Vestibular PT.

You don't have to wait 4-6 weeks hoping the symptoms will go away on their own. That's a long time to wait when you feel dizzy.



**The Hearing Loss Association of America** (formerly Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH)) is the nation's largest membership and advocacy organization for people with hearing loss. This group opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, advocacy and support. It publishes a bimonthly magazine, Hearing Loss and their website is [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org). There is a local chapter who provides monthly speakers. We encourage you to participate!

Contact them at [BoiseValleySHHH@aol.com](mailto:BoiseValleySHHH@aol.com) or 939-8925

**Newsflash:** T-Mobile has at least one cell phone handset that is compatible with hearing aids.

*On a Personnel Note:*

Melanie van de Pol hails from Mt. Vernon, WA and has lived in Boise for one year. She will be beginning her doctoral program in January and is the new Meridian clinic manager. In her spare time, she enjoys to read, mountain bike, hike, run, walk her dog and spend time with friends and family.

Dr. Debbie Baerlocher is singing in The Mikado with Opera Idaho—to perform in March. Perhaps she will get some skiing in too. She will be presenting at the Idaho Speech, Hearing, and Language Association (ISHA) meeting in March as well.

Clair Ketchum will be taking her family for a sleigh ride in Sun valley this winter. Then she'll try to keep warm and spend time enjoying her children.

Jill Galanter is a former ski instructor and plans on skiing a lot this winter with her family.