

INFORMATION FROM

Associated Audiologists, Inc. "Hearing Your Best for Life"

Is It Time to **RECHARGE** Your Hearing?

There's been a lot of talk lately about rechargeable hearing aids, especially a new model called BEYOND Z™ from Widex. ----->

Let's take a quick look at what you should know when considering a rechargeable hearing aid.

Benefits

The BEYOND Z does all the same things as the sophisticated BEYOND hearing aid, but instead of traditional hearing aid batteries, uses rechargeable silver zinc batteries.

Other features of the BEYOND Z include:

- > Lowest power consumption of any rechargeable hearing aid available, giving wearers a full day of the most advanced hearing and superior streaming sound quality.
- > Recharges overnight, just like your phone, so you're always powered up and ready for another day.
- > If you run out of power, BEYOND Z accepts traditional zinc-air batteries as a back-up power source.
- > If you already have BEYOND hearing aids, your audiologist can retrofit them to be rechargeable by changing the battery door. There is a cost involved.
- > Available in three technology levels for individuals with certain degrees of hearing loss.

- > Automatically adjusts sound to changing listening situations.
- > 30 percent better speech understanding in wind for comfortable, natural sound.
- > Brilliant streaming sound when listening to music, taking phone calls, or watching TV.
- > Superior sound quality and the cleanest sound of any hearing instrument, even in challenging situations.

Considerations

Though rechargeable hearing aids like the BEYOND Z are becoming increasingly popular, traditional hearing aids/batteries are still a practical and budget-friendly choice for many patients, and since they are mercury-free, they are more "green" than in the past.

"Many patients think rechargeable hearing aids will be a more cost-effective option, but after analyzing the numbers, we don't believe there is a significant savings at this time," explained Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, President, Associated Audiologists.

When purchasing rechargeable hearing aids, the initial investment includes the charger and the



cost of the first rechargeable battery or batteries. The rechargeable battery life depends on the type of rechargeable battery used in your device. The annual cost of replacement rechargeable batteries is currently the same as disposable batteries.

"Bottom line, we're excited about the BEYOND Z. It offers more flexibility than we have seen in other rechargeable devices, but we want our patients to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of this emerging technology," Dr. Steele said. "You still have to purchase the charging station, remember to charge your hearing aids every night, and eventually, you will need to replace the batteries."

For more information about BEYOND Z and to understand rechargeable hearing aid technology, talk with your audiologist. <-----



Tinnitus May Affect Sleep

Many of our patients who have tinnitus suspect that it is loudest when they are in bed while trying to fall asleep. However, the actual loudness of tinnitus does not vary much during the day. Tinnitus can seem more intense at bedtime though because there is less environmental noise to mask or cover up the tinnitus.

In addition, sleep may be affected by sound sensitivity conditions. Some people report that external sounds can distract or delay them from falling asleep (snoring, dogs barking, street noise, etc.). As with tinnitus, these sounds may seem more noticeable/bothersome due to a lack of noise to mask them.

Here are some tips to help you get a good night's sleep!

- > Set a bedtime and a wake-up time. You should be tired enough to sleep at your bedtime. Exposure to sunlight may help you wake up.
- > Do not nap during the day.
- > Get regular exercise during the day to promote sleep and improve relaxation.
- > Avoid caffeine and alcohol several hours before bedtime.
- > Use sound to prepare for sleep or while awake during the night. Select soft, peaceful sounds, such as nature sounds, music or white noise. Consider a pillow speaker or timer if the sound bothers others. Special sound pillows can be purchased online.
- > Use a sound machine or download a sound therapy app (such as relaxing sounds, white noise, etc.).

If tinnitus continues to keep you from sleeping, make an appointment with Susan Smittkamp, Au.D., Ph.D., FAAA, our tinnitus and sound sensitivity specialist. Dr. Smittkamp practices at our Shawnee Mission Clinic, 913-403-0018.

CLINIC CORNER

Question:

How can I maximize the life of my Z-Power rechargeable batteries?

Answer:

Always fully charge the batteries daily. This is indicated by the solid green light in the charging dock. A full charge may require up to seven hours. Here are a few other tips to help you get the most from your rechargeable batteries:

- > Don't try to extend your battery life by charging every other day as this increases the odds of fully depleting your battery. A fully depleted battery takes longer to charge and may not charge fully in time for the next use.
- > Do not reboot hearing aids after a low battery warning. If the batteries are completely drained and the aids have switched off, never attempt to power on again by opening and closing the battery door. This can over-discharge your battery. Instead, either place the aids in the charging dock or insert disposable batteries until you have time to recharge your batteries.
- > When not using your hearing aids for an extended period of time, remove your batteries or keep them on your charging dock with the dock plugged in. Your batteries cannot overcharge and this will ensure your batteries are fully charged and ready to use when needed.
- > Do not place rechargeable batteries into an active drying kit. The circuitry in the battery door will continue to draw current even if the hearing aids are turned off. Also, the temperature range of an active drying system typically exceeds the specified rechargeable battery operating temperature which may reduce the life of the battery.
- > Only charge Z-Power batteries while the battery and door are installed in a hearing aid. Batteries should not be charged in the doors only as this may lead to incomplete or failed charging.
- > If you're not going to be using your hearing aids for over three hours, remove batteries completely from your hearing aid. Circuitry in the battery door will continue to discharge your battery even when the door is open and may lead to over-discharging your battery.
- > Do not allow your rechargeable batteries to come into contact with metal objects such as coins and keys.
- > Use a soft tissue to remove any moisture from your batteries and/or charging dock prior to charging. Do not use rubbing alcohol or other chemicals to clean.

For more information about rechargeable batteries, talk with your audiologist.



Find us on facebook.
www.facebook.com/hearingyourbest



Hear Here...

By Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, President, Associated Audiologists, Inc.

We recently mailed a physician newsletter to all of our referring physicians to update them on hearing aid cost as a barrier to seeking help for hearing loss. It's no secret that hearing aids can be a costly investment for your improved health, communication, and brain function, but the evidence is strong that it may be more costly to not act. There is now significant evidence to show that untreated hearing loss is connected to cognitive decline, depression, diabetes, heart disease and other medical conditions.

The current use rates of hearing aids in the United States is often reported at near 33 percent. This means that over half of those who could benefit from hearing aids do not use them. Ironically, in Europe where socialized medicine covers hearing aids at no cost to citizens, the use rate is only slightly higher at 42 percent. Clearly, cost isn't the only barrier to seeking hearing help.

However, the perception that hearing aids are expensive has caused some confusion for consumers, especially by all the available options to purchase hearing aids ranging from online, big box retail, and store-front dispensers to doctoral-level audiologists. Don't be fooled by ads and mailers because a low-cost hearing aid always has a caveat.

We are even seeing "cheap" hearing aids sometimes promoted by health insurance companies or their affiliates. They'll promote these devices using confusing wording like

"hearing aids available with low co-pays." In most cases, low-cost hearing aids are either using basic processors which don't perform as well in complex environments, or they are promoting an older, out-dated technology that they are trying to clear from the warehouse. In other cases, the purchase includes only the hearing aid and fitting, but no additional follow-up services. And in some cases, it's both low-end technology and no additional service included. The research shows better satisfaction and use when hearing aids are fit and followed by an audiologist.

With this in mind, I've always believed that we can help anyone who is motivated to hear better. I realize there is a fine balance between cost and overall performance/satisfaction. What most people don't realize is that a hearing aid isn't just a piece of technology like a mobile phone that can be picked up off the shelf from the store. It is a miniaturized, custom-fit, prescription-programmed device that needs regular maintenance, along with monitoring for wax build-up and hearing status of the user.

We've worked hard to provide a range of hearing aid technologies that work well at a wide range of price points, but also still include the important service during the critical adjustment period. Many of our referring physicians are surprised to learn that we offer better hearing aid technology using standards of care, such as real-ear verification and minimal follow-up appointments

that are comparable to or better than Costco. We have hearing aids starting at \$750, which are not high-end technology. However, they are often better than the "low co-pay" hearing aids touted in insurance mailings.

We understand it's become very confusing for consumers to navigate all their options for improved hearing. We also don't want cost to be a barrier for anyone seeking help. As an independent, private practice of doctoral-level audiologists, we take pride in providing the most options available compared to any retailer, accept most insurances, offer a no-interest finance option, and the highest level of care in the region with ranges of costs and technologies for any budget. Our practice can review all your options so you understand the pros and cons. We work with many of the insurance plans or third-party distributors, but recommend you contact us first to get educated. We do this without sacrificing the professional services and care that our patients and their families deserve.

You can also be assured that your dollars aren't going to a corporate conglomerate looking to make a quick buck or meet unit sales quotas. We are proud to be a local, family owned and operated business. We not only work in your community, but we live here too and are happy to support local growth. You are our friends, family, and neighbors. We've been here over 30 years. At Associated Audiologists, we appreciate your business and loyalty.



Don't Try this at Home!

Four Reasons Why You Need a Professional to Treat Dizziness

By Danielle Dorner, Au.D., FAAA,
Dizziness and Balance Specialist



Dizziness can be debilitating. Statistics say the average dizzy patient visits four doctors before receiving an adequate diagnosis and treatment. When you factor in the time it takes to be seen by each physician, that can be a very long time to experience dizziness.

In addition, it's not uncommon for people to search for answers online. But how do you know which answer is correct? Without an expert's opinion or diagnosis, you don't. We often see patients who have unsuccessfully tried to diagnose and treat themselves by "Googling" their symptoms.

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is a very common inner ear related problem. BPPV can be described by attacks of true room-spinning vertigo that typically last less than one minute and are provoked by changing positions. Approximately 50 percent of people over the age of 70 will experience this at least once in their lifetime. However, it can occur at any point in your life. This condition is the result of a mechanical problem within your inner ear (deep in your skull).

BPPV, when diagnosed correctly, can be fixed with different physical maneuvers. If you do an online search for BPPV treatment, you'll find videos that attempt to show you how you can self-treat. The problem is that this condition can occur in six different areas within your inner ear. Each

problem area requires a different set of treatments and maneuvers. Specialized audiologists have spent years studying and perfecting these treatments.

As a lay person, it is difficult to determine the specific affected area or the best treatment. Self-treatment maneuvers used to treat BPPV online can actually cause more problems such as:

- 1. Migration.** The displaced particles move from one semi-circular canal into a different canal. Typically, this dizziness is very intense and lasts for a longer time. Instead of getting dizzy with position changes, you get dizzy with every head movement. This often is accompanied by nausea.
- 2. Canalith jam.** During repositioning maneuvers, the objective is to move the particles from one canal back to where they belong. Sometimes, they can get stuck. When this happens, you experience intense dizziness because those particles are constantly stimulating the membrane until they are physically forced out. This experience can be dangerous when self-treating and is best handled in the care of an experienced professional.
- 3. Crisis of Tumarkin.** In the process of moving the displaced particles back where they belong, they can

get "hung up on a shelf" in the inner ear anatomy. When you sit up, gravity causes them to drop quickly. When this happens, you can experience a significant attack of dizziness, causing you to feel like you are falling or that the floor is dropping out from underneath you.

- 4. Severed vertebral artery.** As trained audiologists, we have to take orthopedic issues (aches and pains) into consideration. Prior to every treatment, we perform a screening to ensure your vertebral artery (major artery in the back of your neck that provides significant blood supply and oxygen to your brain) is not compromised.

If our screening is positive, we need to modify our maneuvering techniques to keep our patients safe. If modifications are not made and self-treatment is performed, this artery could be damaged, which could lead to a stroke.

Even if you have a friend who has a similar condition as you, everyone's body reacts differently. Your friend's treatment may not work for you. To find out what will work best, don't ask "Google" using an online search, but seek the professional help of a specialized vestibular audiologist. That's the safest and best way to diagnose and treat any problem of dizziness or vertigo, including BPPV.

**Dr. Dorner sees patients with dizziness and balance disorders at our
Overland Park and Northland Clinics. To schedule an appointment with her, call 816-442-7831.**

Hearing Aids a Game-Changer for Jeff Miner

As a licensed psychologist who provides professional counseling to athletes, listening is what 53-year-old Jeff Miner does.

But when he began having problems hearing a few years ago, it started to affect his work and his relationships, especially with his 13-year-old daughter, Savannah.

"In my office, I would often find myself asking 'What?' a lot," Jeff said. "Or I had to ask my patients to repeat themselves. I struggled all day long to hear and process what they were saying. I would go home drained every night."

Once at home, Jeff's struggle continued. "My daughter's voice is right in the range of sounds that I can't hear. She was getting tired of repeating herself and interpreting what the characters were saying when we were watching TV," he admits. "Plus, I had the volume turned up to 55!"

Finally, Jeff decided it was time to do something about his hearing loss. "I didn't want to buy a hearing aid from a retail store. I wanted to see a professional," Jeff said, "so I searched for 'audiologist near me' online."

Lisa Battani, Au.D., FAAA, Hearing Aid Program Director with Associated Audiologists, appeared in Jeff's search, and he scheduled an appointment at the practice's Shawnee Mission clinic.

"Dr. Battani was very professional, but she also is the nicest person you could ever hope to meet," Jeff said. "She conducted my hearing evaluation



Jeff Miner with his daughter, Savannah.

and explained the results to me so that I could understand my hearing loss."

In addition, Dr. Battani took Jeff's occupation, lifestyle and budget into consideration before recommending Widex Beyond 440s for him. "Widex offers the best access to soft sounds," Dr. Battani said. "When dealing with soft spoken clients revealing sensitive details, Jeff needs to hear what they're saying correctly the first time."

"Budget was a concern for me," Jeff admitted, "but Dr. Battani balanced that with my need for advanced features, like Bluetooth technology."

The day Dr. Battani fit Jeff with his new hearing aids, he said he felt like a kid again. "It was like, 'Wow! I can hear!' And Dr. Battani was as excited for me as I was!"

Outside, he immediately noticed the birds singing and the wind blowing through the trees. "I hadn't heard those sounds for years!"

At work, he says he can now hear every word his patients are saying, but it's the impact his hearing aids have had on his relationship with his daughter Savannah that's most rewarding.

"Wearing hearing aids has improved our relationship immensely," Jeff said. "They have been a game-changer. Savannah has been more excited about this than anyone except me."

Jeff also enjoys using the Bluetooth technology to stream phone calls and music directly to his hearing aids. "The sound quality is great and perfectly clear," he said.

Looking back, Jeff said he isn't sure why he waited to get his hearing aids. "The stereotype of wearing hearing aids and budget were both concerns, but I shouldn't have waited," Jeff said.

"My hearing aids have changed everything for me. I had no idea what I was missing out on!"

STAFF NEWS

Welcome Externs!

Two externs are joining the practice June 1 to complete their one-year externships.

Jonathan York is a student at Wichita State. Jonathan has been performing research on the new over-the-counter hearing aid bill. Before studying audiology, he was a firefighter/paramedic. Jonathan and his wife have a young daughter, and their family is relocating to the Kansas City area. He anticipates graduating with his doctorate in audiology in May 2019.



Jonathan York

Olivia Olson is attending Missouri State University in Springfield, Mo., pursuing her doctorate in audiology degree. Olivia is originally from Mason City, Iowa. She enjoys playing golf, spending time with friends and family, boating, and looks forward to living in the Kansas City area. She also expects to graduate with her doctorate in audiology in May 2019.



Olivia Olson

Congratulations

Dr. Lindsey Pacey recently tied the knot with Grant Stephenson in Beloit, Kansas. Dr. Pacey was previously the audiologist at our Northland clinic. Dr. Tim Steele and his wife, Julie, along with Dr. Danielle Dorner and her husband, Brad, all attended the ceremony. Congratulations and best wishes Lindsey and Grant!



Congratulations to **Diane** on her retirement from Associated Audiologists. Diane joined the practice in May 2009. She started at the front office as an administrative assistant and worked in our Prairie Village and Shawnee Mission clinics. Later, she transitioned to assist with patient intake, claims assistance, insurance benefits and medical records. Diane was a loyal and dedicated member of the Associated Audiologists team and we miss her greatly! She is looking forward to spending time with her daughter, son-in-law and four granddaughters who live in the Manhattan area. Please join us in wishing Diane the best of luck!



Dana Jacobson, Au.D., FAAA, Overland Park Clinic Manager and Senior Audiologist, along with her husband and their son, welcomed a healthy baby girl into their family Dec. 24, 2017.



Dr. Jacobson

Audiologists Serve Community

Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, President, was recently elected to the Overland Park Rotary Foundation Board of Directors. The foundation provides funding for humanitarian, charitable, and education programs for children, youth and young adults in the community.



Dr. Steele

Lisa Battani, Au.D., FAAA, Hearing Aid Program Director, is serving a three-year term on the Shawnee Mission Rotary Club Board of Directors. Dr. Battani has been a member of the club for two years.



Dr. Battani

Susan Smittkamp, Au.D., Ph.D., FAAA, audiologist and tinnitus specialist, recently joined the Shawnee Kiwanis Club.



Dr. Smittkamp

David Paul, Au.D., FAAA, recently joined several other area audiologists for a panel discussion at the University of Kansas, which was sponsored by the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA). The panel members shared their experiences in audiology with approximately two dozen KU undergraduates who have an interest in speech and hearing. Dr. Paul, a military veteran and active member of the National Guard, earned his doctorate in audiology from the University of Kansas Medical Center, and sees patients at our Leavenworth Clinic.



Dr. Paul

Shawnee Mission Clinic Receives a Facelift

Our **Shawnee Mission Clinic** will undergo a facelift, including new carpet and paint May 31 to June 4. The clinic will be closed for five days while this work is being completed. Telephones will be forwarded and we will provide ongoing audiology support for our patients at our other metro clinics. Look for updates on Facebook and Twitter as the work begins.



2018 Insurance Update

To say that insurance coverage related to hearing aids can be very complicated is an understatement. That's why we have made it our business to understand how these insurance plans work, and what your benefits are.

A new trend for health insurance companies is to provide hearing aids through exclusive third-party distribution organizations. In some cases, companies such as United Health Care own subsidiary companies that directly sell hearing aids. This has been under scrutiny by the Kansas Attorney General.

Our patients also are being told that in order to use a hearing aid benefit, they must go through a specific organization to secure hearing aids, which is not necessarily true.

In other cases, you may be told that your insurance provides a hearing aid benefit. Instead, they are simply distributing an inexpensive, low-quality hearing device.

We have two full-time staff members that spend most of their days assisting our audiologists and patients, helping them better understand the differences between carriers and their individual plans.

Please call us before speaking with a customer service agent at your insurance company about your hearing aid benefits.

We have seen many times when the representative answering the phone is not familiar with audiology and hearing aids, and is unaware of the specific contract details with Associated Audiologists.

If you have any questions about your insurance coverage or a "hearing aid benefit," don't hesitate to call or visit with us about your options.

Help Get H.R. 2276/S. 2575 (Audiology Patient Choice Act) – Enacted

Associated Audiologists supports the passage of the Audiology Patient Choice Act, which would provide Medicare patients with direct access to a doctoral-level audiologist without a referral from a primary care provider.

This would streamline access and care for many of our patients, reducing wait times for appointments and the need for paperwork.

If you would like to support this movement, you can help by contacting your senators and representatives.

Visit <http://18x18.org/congressional-connect> and select the Enact HR 2226/S 2575 Audiology Patient Choice Act and then select the form letter you would like to use depending on your role (patient, audiologist, administrator).

Enter your contact information and the system will automatically find your senators and representatives, sending the letter to all of them with just one click. The entire process only takes a few minutes.



**ASSOCIATED
AUDIOLOGISTS**

We are on a mission:
To improve lives through
comprehensive audiology care.

Hearing Your Best is published regularly by Associated Audiologists, Inc. All materials are created by our audiologists solely for the education of our patients and referring physicians. Any reproduction must be approved in writing by our editor. © 2018 by Associated Audiologists, Inc. If you have comments or suggestions, please direct them to:

Editor: Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA

Contributors: David Nissen, Stacey Baldwin, Dana Jacobson, Susan Smittkamp, Linda Erickson, Sarah Jo Mediavilla, Travis Hopkins Williams, Lisa Battani, Danielle Dorner, David Paul, Sarah Schotte and Katie Petrosky all Fellows of the American Academy of Audiology.

Northland
8350 N. St. Clair Ave.,
Suite 175
Kansas City, MO
64151
816-442-7831

Overland Park
12541 Foster St.,
Suite 220
Overland Park, KS
66213
913-498-2827

Prairie Village
7301 Mission Rd.,
Suite 140
Prairie Village, KS
66208
913-262-5855

Shawnee Mission
8800 W. 75th St.,
Suite 101
Shawnee Mission, KS
66204
913-403-0018

Leavenworth
1001 Sixth Ave.,
Suite 105
Leavenworth, KS
66048
913-682-1870

Manhattan
1133 College Ave.,
Building A, Suite 101A
Manhattan, KS
66502
785-539-7361

If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please e-mail lisa@hearingyourbest.com.



hearingyourbest.com



Hearing Your Best for Life

hearingyourbest.com

P.O. BOX 19087
Lenexa, KS 66285

Return Service Requested

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 6412
Kansas City, MO

Important
information
about hearing
and balance
health from your
audiologist.

Hearing Your Best

There's an app for that...

Want to find a quiet restaurant, bar, or coffee shop where
you can actually hear your date, colleague, or partner?

Do you need a quiet place to study or relax?



The **SoundPrint app**, developed by a Widex hearing aid wearer, enables you to search for such quieter venues as well as moderate or noisy venues.

SoundPrint's own decibel meter also allows you to measure the loudness of the venue and submit (crowdsource) that data to the database. This is very useful for managers, employees, and patrons as well as the hearing impaired, blind, autistic or those who simply prefer quiet spots.



FEATURES

- > Search for venues based on their noise level (i.e., quiet spot, moderate spot, or a noisy spot).
- > Measure the decibel level of any venue.
- > Submit the decibel level measurement of any venue to SoundPrint's database.

The SoundPrint app is available to download free from the app store on your smartphone.