

World Hearing Day: A music to your ears

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World Hearing Day
3 March

Hearing impairment is a serious health problem significantly affecting the quality of life of those affected. It can be caused by several factors. Hearing loss can be broadly classified into conductive and sensorineural. Those factors that cause a block in the conduction of sound from the external environment to the inner ear cause a conductive hearing loss and are completely curable. Factors affecting the inner ear and the auditory nerve however cause a sensorineural hearing loss and are only preventable. Treatment for such disorders is expensive and sometimes unsatisfactory. Hearing loss can be congenital or acquired. Acquired causes of hearing loss are completely preventable. The common causes are ear infections, exposure to loud noise, effect of toxins, and head trauma. As part of the World Hearing Day on March 3, it is important to understand the causes and the many remedies to hearing problems and one can do a lot on one's own to prevent the onset of hearing-loss.

Let us examine a few causes and solutions to common hearing problems. Infections of the middle ear can occur at all age, but start mostly in childhood. Neglected ear infections tend to be the leading cause of hearing morbidity in our country. They can be cured by simple surgery. Untreated middle ear infections can lead to sudden life threatening complications and sometimes permanent hearing loss. Attention should be paid to childhood ear infections and treated before it becomes a chronic health hazard.

Excessive noise at workplace can cause hearing problems if noise levels go beyond 85 dB and can result in a permanent sensorineural hearing loss. Those working in industries with loud noises can protect their ear by wearing ear plugs and screen for hearing loss at frequent intervals. The volume controls on electronics should be handled carefully and the people must ensure that the volume of TV, radio and personal electronics is kept as low as possible.

Head injury leads to varying degrees of hearing loss depending on the nature of the fracture to the temporal bone. They are preventable by wearing helmets. Foreign bodies in the ear can cause hearing loss as well. The use of cotton buds could lead to trauma and injury to the tympanic membrane and the middle ear ossicles and cause significant hearing impairment contrary to popular belief. The cotton buds in children would not remove ear wax but push the wax deep into the ear canal in front of the ear drum. This can cause significant hearing loss and discomfort. Home remedies like hot oil, garlic and onion inserted into the ear are very harmful and must not be attempted.

Home ear wax removal suction equipment must never be used as tympanic membrane and middle ear ossicles are very minute delicate structures and can be damaged when there is no knowledge of the anatomy involved. It's the responsibility of

every human being to take care of their senses. It is important to be aware of the impact of our everyday activities on our sensory systems and seek professional help when needed. Marking this year's celebration of World Hearing Day on March 3, 2019, an initiative of World Health Organisation's (WHO) Office of Prevention of Blindness and Deafness, that promotes the importance of early detection and treatment for hearing loss, let's vow to protect our ears this hearing day, for there is so much to hear in this beautiful world.

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