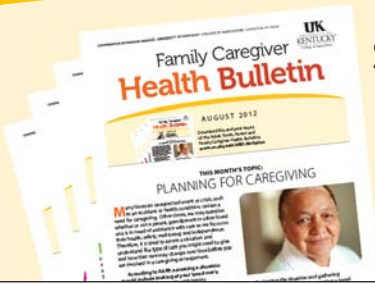


# Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



SEPTEMBER 2012

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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

# CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH HEARING LOSS

**N**ormal age-related hearing loss, also called prebyscusis, can occur so gradually, that many people do not even know they have a hearing impairment. Loved ones and caregivers are often the first to notice. Signs of hearing loss include:

- Complaining that voices sound muffled or slurred
- Difficulty following conversation, especially against background noise
- Frequently asking others to repeat themselves, or to speak more slowly, clearly, or loudly
- Playing the television or radio too loud
- No more laughing at jokes or stories
- Asking others for details from a meeting, movie, or other type of function
- Not hearing the sound of the telephone or doorbell
- Complaining about ringing in the ear
- Withdrawing from conversations and social settings



Contact a health care professional if hearing loss interferes with daily life, if there is a sudden change in hearing, or if hearing loss is associated with symptoms such as headaches, vision changes, or dizziness.

As a caregiver, it can be challenging to provide care to someone who cannot hear clearly. Successful

Continued on the back 

# Talking too loudly or slowly distorts sounds making it more difficult to hear.

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communication will require effort and good communication strategies:

- **Position yourself.** When talking, face each other straight-on. If the listener hears better in one ear, speak to that ear.
- **Eliminate distracting noises.** Turn off televisions and radios when talking. Don't cross talk in a group. Have the person with hearing loss sit with his back to a wall to help cut additional noise.
- **Speak clearly and slowly, but naturally, without shouting or exaggerating lip movements.** Talking too loudly or slowly distorts sounds making it more difficult to hear.
- **Avoid talking too rapidly or using sentences that are too complex.** Slow down, pause between sentences or phrases, and wait to make sure you have been understood before going on.
- **Acquaint the listener with the general topic of the conversation.** Avoid sudden changes in topic or make it known that the subject is changing.
- **Don't just repeat yourself.** If the person has difficulty understanding a particular phrase or word, try to find a different way of saying the same thing.
- **Seek clarification.** If you are sharing specific information, such as a time or date, ask for the information to be repeated. It is also wise to put important information in writing.
- **Don't cover your mouth when talking.** Speech is more difficult to understand if you are eating, chewing or covering your mouth with your hands. Facial hair can also interfere with lip reading.
- **Lower your pitch.** Lower voices are often easier to hear than high pitched voices.
- **Use gestures.** Universal gestures, such as head nods, or raised eye brows support conversation.
- **Pay attention.** If you receive a puzzled look,

you were likely misunderstood. Tactfully ask the person if they understood you, or ask leading questions so you know your message got across.

- **Encourage hearing aids or assistive listening devices.** Hearing aids, TV-listening systems or telephone-amplifying devices help people hear and add to quality of life.
- **Keep ears clean.** Regular visits to a health care provider are important.
- **Maintain hearing aids.** Make sure that hearing aids are working, clean and free from ear wax. Hearing aids are replaced approximately every 5 years. Depending on the battery, power of the hearing aid, setting of the volume control and other factors, the average life of a hearing aid battery is 1 to 4 weeks.
- **Recognize people's limits and have patience.** It takes a lot of motivation, concentration, and energy for a person with hearing loss to function well. Hearing and understanding can be even more challenging when ill or tired.

### RESOURCES:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)  
<http://www.asha.org/> or 800-498-2071 V/TTY
- Kentucky Association of the Deaf (KAD)  
<http://www.kydeaf.org/>
- Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH):  
[www.kcdhh.ky.gov/oea/tddprog.html](http://www.kcdhh.ky.gov/oea/tddprog.html) or (502) 573-2604
- National Association of the Deaf (NAD)  
[www.nad.org/](http://www.nad.org/) or TTY: 301.587.1789 or Voice/VP: 301.587.1788
- National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA)  
[www.thefamilycaregiver.org/about\\_nfca/](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org/about_nfca/) or 1-800-896-3650

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Family Caregiver  
**Health Bulletin**

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