

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Gen Xers and baby boomers should no longer ignore their hearing loss, says the [Better](#)

[Hearing Institute](#)

(BHI), which is raising awareness of the link between cardiovascular and hearing health in recognition of

[World Heart Day](#)

on

September 29

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. A growing body of research shows that a person's hearing health and cardiovascular health frequently correspond. And because the jury is still out on exactly why there is a connection and which comes first, it behooves those 40 and older to get their hearing tested as a routine part of their medical care. The vast majority of people with hearing loss can benefit from hearing aids, which have been shown to improve quality of life.

To help people determine if they need a comprehensive hearing test by a hearing healthcare professional, BHI is offering a free, quick, and confidential online hearing check at www.hearingcheck.org.

Some experts—like Charles E. Bishop, AuD, Assistant Professor in the University of Mississippi Medical Center's

Department of Otolaryngology and Communicative Sciences—find the evidence showing a link between cardiovascular and hearing health so compelling that they say

[the ear may be a window to the heart](#)

. Bishop believes the closer the collaboration between medical disciplines the better for the patient.

"Hearing health should not be assessed in a vacuum," says Bishop. "There is simply too much evidence that hearing loss is related to cardiovascular disease and other health conditions. It's time we maximized the information we have in order to benefit the individual's overall wellbeing."

Why the Heart-Hearing Connection?

Studies have shown that a healthy cardiovascular system—a person's heart, arteries, and veins—has a positive effect on hearing. Conversely, inadequate blood flow and trauma to the blood vessels of the inner ear can contribute to hearing loss.

David R. Friedland, MD, PhD, Professor and Vice-Chair of Otolaryngology and Communication Sciences at the [University of Wisconsin Medical College of Wisconsin](#) in Milwaukee, has been studying the relationship between cardiovascular and hearing health for years. He offers up this response:

"The inner ear is so sensitive to blood flow that it is possible that abnormalities in the cardiovascular system could be noted here earlier than in other less sensitive parts of the body."

In one [study](#), published in *The Laryngoscope*, Dr. Friedland and fellow researchers found that audiogram pattern correlates strongly with cerebrovascular and peripheral arterial disease and may represent a screening test for those at risk. They even concluded that patients with low-frequency hearing loss should be regarded as at risk for cardiovascular events, and appropriate referrals should be considered.

Other evidence exists. In fact, the authors of a [study](#) published in the *American Journal of Audiology* [concluded](#) that the negative influence of impaired cardiovascular health on both the peripheral and central auditory system—and the potential positive influence of improved cardiovascular health on these same systems—have been found through a sizable body of research conducted over more than six decades.

Cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke, cause 17.3 million deaths each year. For more information about [World Heart Day](#), cardiovascular health, and how people can reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke, visit www.world-heart-federation.org.

About Hearing Aids

Research shows that hearing loss is frequently associated with other physical, mental, and emotional health conditions, and that people who address their hearing loss often experience better quality of life. Eight out of 10 hearing aid users, in fact, say they're satisfied with the changes that have occurred in their lives specifically due to their hearing aids—from how they feel about themselves to the positive changes they see in their relationships, social interactions, and work lives.

When people with even mild hearing loss use hearing aids, they often improve their job performance; enhance their communication skills; increase their earnings potential; improve their professional and interpersonal relationships; stave off depression; gain an enhanced sense of control over their lives; and better their quality of life.

Here are five little-known facts about today's hearing aids:

1. They're virtually invisible. Many of today's hearing aids sit discreetly and comfortably inside the ear canal, providing both natural sound quality, and discreet and easy use.
2. They automatically adjust to all kinds of soundscapes. Recent technological advances with directional microphones have made hearing aids far more versatile than ever before—and in a broad range of sound environments.
3. You can enjoy water sports and sweat while wearing them. Waterproof digital hearing aids have arrived. This feature is built into some newly designed hearing aids for those concerned about water, humidity, and dust. This feature suits the active lifestyles of swimmers, skiers, snowboarders, intensive sports enthusiasts and anyone working in dusty, demanding environments.
4. They work with smartphones, home entertainment systems and other electronics. Wireless, digital hearing aids are now the norm. That means seamless connectivity—directly into your hearing aid(s) at volumes that are just right for you—from your smartphone, MP3 player, television and other high-tech gadgets.
5. They're always at the ready. A new rechargeable feature on some newly designed hearing aids allows you to recharge your hearing aids every night, so they're ready in the morning. It's super convenient —and there's no more fumbling with small batteries.

For more information on hearing loss, visit www.BetterHearing.org .

Heart Disease and Hearing Loss Linked, So Get Your Hearing Checked for World Heart Day, BHI Advises

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