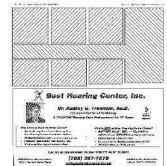


Families Can Help Loved Ones with Hearing Loss Address the Problem This Holiday Season By Audrey G. Freeman, Au.D., Doctor of Audiology

The Better Hearing Institute (BHI) is urging families across America to keep loved ones with hearing loss close this holiday season by encouraging them to get their hearing checked and to have any hearing loss properly treated. By visiting www.hearingcheck.org, family members can use a simple, interactive screening tool to check their hearing in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. Families could also check their hearing together during holiday gatherings as a way to offer support.

"The holiday season is meant to be a time of thanks, celebration, and joy," says Sergei Kochkin, Ph.D. Executive Director of the Better Hearing Institute. "But for many people, it is a time of year when unaddressed hearing loss can cause them to feel particularly isolated and depressed. Even when surrounded by loved ones a family member's impaired ability to hear and actively participate in conversation cuts them off. Oftentimes, they are left with a sense of sadness, inadequacy, and emotional isolation. This is especially true when the hearing loss is either unrecognized or is being 'hidden' by the family mem-



ber with hearing loss."

Hearing loss is one of the most commonly unaddressed health conditions in America today and affects more than 31.5 million Americans. Sixty-five percent are below retirement age. When left untreated, hearing loss can lead to isolation and depression—a health issue that is already prevalent during the holiday season and may likely be more widespread this year given the added financial worries that many Americans are currently facing.

So this year, be especially vigilant if you see that Uncle Fred is quiet at Thanksgiving or other holiday dinners. Maybe he can't hear you and needs your help in bringing him close to the family again.

Signs and symptoms of hearing loss include not being able to hear well in a crowded room or restaurant, having trouble hearing children and women, keeping the television or radio turned up to a high volume, needing to ask family and friends to repeat what they're saying, or experiencing ringing in the ears.

"When a family member experiences unaddressed hearing loss, it silently

erodes the loved one's quality of life.

This undermines family relationships, interferes with short-term memory, and creeps into virtually every aspect of daily living," says Kochkin. "The good news is there are solutions to help loved ones with hearing loss regain the gift of sound, so they don't need to draw back in silence. Hearing loss can be easily diagnosed, and there are modern-day solutions that can help people hear better."

Most important, if someone you love appears to have a hearing loss, encourage them to get a hearing evaluation," Kochkin urges. "Many people decide to get their hearing checked

because someone they love suggested it and provided support. And now, with the interactive tool available at www.hearingcheck.org, family members can more easily take that first critical step in reclaiming their hearing, quality of life, and relationships."

If a hearing loss is a problem in your family, make an appointment soon with your trusted licensed audiologist. What better gift can you give this holiday season?