



May 26th, 2014

May is Speech and Hearing Month

More than one million adult Canadians report some form of hearing-related disability, according to StatsCan, but the Hearing Foundation of Canada expects that number might be closer to three million. The Foundation also reports a 30 percent increase in the number of teens reporting hearing loss.

Hearing loss is typically associated with aging, but up to 15 percent of youngsters are hard of hearing due to a variety of causes. New studies are showing that fitting these kids with hearing aids sooner, rather than later, benefits more than their hearing; speaking skills, articulation and language development all fare better as well. Even children with minimal hearing loss benefit, but a well-fitted hearing aid is key.

Get your hearing checked

Hearing is one of those things you don't appreciate until it's gone. Signs you need to get your hearing checked include turning up the volume of the TV or radio, having trouble understanding conversations or asking people to repeat themselves. An audiogram involves listening for tones of different frequencies and volumes as well as listening to recorded voices speaking similar-sounding words to test speech discrimination. Not painful – but enlightening!

Many parents of infants use "sleep machines" which generate a variety of sounds to muffle other noises which may interfere with the infant's sleep. Now, research out of the University of Toronto is suggesting that using these machines can lead to damaged hearing and may even impair auditory development. A suggested maximum level for safety is 50 decibels, but all of the machines tested exceeded this level. So, use with caution!

Some news about sleep

One factor which can affect more than just sleep is the use of nightlights. The link between insufficient sleep and the risk of obesity is becoming an established fact and now it is being noted that the use of nightlights disrupts the circadian rhythm, further contributing to obesity. And, consider more than nightlights; any environmental sources of light could have this effect – illuminated computer screens, televisions and street lights. More evidence that a dark, quiet room is beneficial to good sleep!

May is Speech and Hearing Month and many don't appreciate the intricate connection between these two functions. If you have any questions or concerns about your hearing, speak to your pharmacist about what you can do.