**Hearing Loss and Smoking:**

New research indicates that people who smoke, or have passive exposure to tobacco smoke have an increased risk of hearing loss.

A study conducted by the University of Manchester found that current smokers have a 15.1% higher risk of hearing loss than non-smokers. Passive smoke exposure increased the risk of hearing loss by 28%.

The study found that the more you smoke and the longer you smoke, the greater the risk you will damage your hearing. The link between smoking and hearing loss is still unclear. Dr. Piers Dawes stated “We are not sure if toxins in tobacco smoke affect hearing directly, or whether smoking-related cardiovascular disease causes microvascular changes that impact on hearing, or both.”

While many people think that hearing loss is an inevitable consequence of aging, that is not always the case. Giving up smoking is one way to help protect your hearing and prevent hearing loss as you get older.

Dawes et al., Cigarette Smoking, Passive Smoking, Alcohol Consumption and Hearing loss. *Journal of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology*. 2014

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**Communication Strategies: When Dealing with Hearing Loss.**

The next time you’re talking with a family member, co-worker, or friend with hearing loss try these tips to help you both get more out of the conversation:

- **Close the Gap.** Decrease the distance between you and the person with hearing loss, especially when there is background noise.

- **Get the Listener’s Attention.** Before talking, say the person’s name and face them. Gently touch their hand, arm or shoulder to gain their attention.

- **Maintain Eye Contact.** Non-verbal communication, facial expressions, and body language are key elements of improved overall communication.

- **Limit Any Distractions.** Reduce or move away from competing noise (loud music, TV), request seating in a quiet location, increase light sources, and try to keep your hands from obscuring your mouth when you talk.

- **Speak Naturally.** Speak clearly, distinctly and at a natural pace. Use pauses between phrases if needed. Face the hearing impaired person and try not to mumble. Do Not Shout. This only distorts their signal!

- **Rephrase It.** If they still don’t understand, rephrase it.

- **Be Patient and Supportive.**
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