



December 2013

MEDIA  
PLANET

## VISION &amp; HEARING HEALTH

PROTECTING  
YOUR SENSES

**Lou Ferrigno, the original Hulk and famous body builder,** speaks out about how hearing aids changed his life and addresses stigmas associated with hearing loss.

Featuring

## DRY EYES

Simple solutions to a common problem

## YOUR LENSES

What you may not know about your contacts

OVERCOMING VISION LOSS TO WIN GOLD:  
BRIAN MCKEEVER TELLS ALL

## Simple steps to safeguard your vision



**Dr. Keith Gordon**  
VICE PRESIDENT, RESEARCH, CNIB

“The most important step you can take to help protect your vision is to get regular eye exams by a Doctor of Optometry.”

According to CNIB research, Canadians are more afraid of losing their eyesight than almost anything else—and given that one in seven of us will develop a serious eye disease, it's a fear that's certainly not unfounded.

Fortunately, 75 percent of vision loss can be prevented or treated, and there's a lot you can do to help save your sight.

“Every 12 minutes, someone in Canada begins to lose their vision. The earlier an eye disease is detected, the greater the chance of preventing or minimizing associated vision loss through treatment,” says Dr. Keith Gordon, Vice President, Research, at CNIB. A 2012 study showed one in seven Canadian adults may be living with some form of vision loss, much of which could be corrected.

Many eye diseases develop gradually and have no symptoms in the early stages until they eventually

make themselves known with vision loss. The ability to perform daily tasks—reading, driving or cooking—is at risk with the loss of one's vision. However, with proper support, people who are blind or partially sighted can learn to see beyond vision loss.

**The importance of eye exams**

The most important step you can take to help protect your vision is to get regular eye exams by a Doctor of Optometry.

The problem is that many Canadians aren't getting their eyes checked as often as they should because they think their eyesight and their eye health are the same thing. They're not.

Just because you have 20/20 vision doesn't mean you have healthy eyes. The reality is that many eye diseases have no symptoms in their early stages, so you may not realize you have an eye disease until it's too late

to get treatment that could save your sight. That's why it's crucial to have regular, comprehensive eye exams, regardless of how old you are.

**Lifestyle choices**

While getting regular eye exams is essential, there are many day-to-day lifestyle choices that can help ensure your check-ups yield positive results—things like eating a healthy diet rich in protective nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, beta-carotene, lutein, zeaxanthin and fiber.

Quitting smoking is perhaps the most important thing you can do for your eye health, as studies have shown that smokers are three to four times more likely to develop age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the primary cause of vision loss in Canada.

Don't overlook the importance of fitness too. Elevated blood pressure and obesity are risk factors for

a number of eye diseases, so maintaining a healthy body weight along with improving cardiovascular health can go a long way towards preserving your vision.

**The effects of eye injuries**

Last year an estimated 720,000 Canadians sustained an eye injury that required medical attention. Don't take needless chances—wear protective eyewear when working with tools or doing yard work, and be sure to follow occupational safety protocols in the workplace.

Sports injuries are on the rise even in unsuspecting sports like soccer. Players of all ages should consult with a Doctor of Optometry to find the best protective eyewear suited to a particular sport.

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CHALLENGES



# SEEING SUCCESS

Don't let your vision problem define you. Stargardt's sufferer Brian McKeever is one of Canada's **most accomplished Paralympians**.

Having a serious visual health problem is something that most of us find impossible to comprehend. It's easy to understand how someone who is slowly losing visual function might slip into depression, hide away from the world and dismiss any big ambitions that they previously held.

Count the medals

Well, the cross-country skier Brain McKeever is doing the complete opposite of that. At the age of 19, McKeever was diagnosed with Stargardt disease, a form of macular degeneration that causes a loss of central vision: "If you stare at the sun for a long time and turn away, you get these fuzzy spots. Well for me, the fuzzy spots don't go away," said McKeever. McKeever hasn't let his disease hold him back: he's had a glittering

career, scooping ten medals for Canada in Paralympics games, including seven gold. McKeever also made history in 2010 when he was named in both the Olympic and Paralympics teams. He's also competed at every world championships since 2005, adding nine titles to sit beside his 21 World Cup wins.

Relentless attitude

As well as having his visual issues to deal with, McKeever has also had to put up with a host of injuries that would have any athlete cursing his luck. In October 2008, he suffered a fracture to his rib, which he followed up in March 2009 by breaking his left humerus in a crash at the Canadian championships. But the common theme throughout McKeever's career has been his never say die attitude, and since these injuries he's powered on to achieve even more in Canadian colours. His achievements almost

— MCKEEVER'S ACHIEVEMENTS —

- World Cup: 22 Gold; 1 Silver; 3 Bronze
- World Championships: 11 Gold; 3 Silver
- Paralympic Games: 7 Gold; 2 Silver; 1 Bronze

verge on the unbelievable and we can only imagine the size of the medal cabinet in his home. During the 2012-2013 season, McKeever continued to scale the heights of winter sports. He won the IPC Cross Country Skiing World Cup title for athletes with a visual impairment and also got two more gold medals in the cross country long distance freestyle and sprint at the 2013 IPC Nordic Skiing World Championships.

McKeever is a shining example of the results that hard work, dedication and a good sprinkling of ability can bring. But it's his refusal to be defined by his visual impairment that sets him out even more. Next time you feel depressed or restricted by your visual condition, think about McKeever and what he would do. Would he sit on the sofa feeling sorry for himself? I think not.

Stargardt disease

- Stargardt disease is inherited and caused by the death of photoreceptor cells in the central portion of the retina (the macula).
- Results in a progressive loss of vision.
- Main initial symptom is a change in central vision, which is used for watching television and reading.

JOE ROSENGARTEN  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

## New perspective on dry eye syndrome

Suffered by one in three Canadian adults, dry eye disease is characterized by a chronic inflammation of the surface of the eye, which includes the cornea and conjunctiva, as well as the eyelids and their surfaces.

Be on the lookout. The early manifestations of the disease can be misleading: it can simply be experienced in the form of a watery eye, fluctuating vision when blinking or a discomfort with your contact lenses. Don't ignore these symptoms or wait for them to go away; book an appointment with your Doctor of Optometry. If left untreated, dry eye disease can cause scarring of the cornea, the conjunctiva or both, which can, in the long-term, lead to a loss of vision. Living with dry eye disease can severely impact the quality of your life.

Causes

Up to 86 percent of dry eye patients suffer with the evaporative type of the disease, which is caused by oil gland (meibomian) dysfunction.

"I've found that in more than 60 percent of these cases the problems stem from exposure, meaning the eyelids are not blinking or closing properly," explained Dr. Richard Maharaj, Clinical Director at eyeLABS Optometry and Center for Ocular Surface Disease. Blinking draws oil out of the glands in our eyelids and into our tear film. When our eyes are unable to blink properly, we're more likely to produce unstable tears, which will be less effective at nourishing and lubricating our eyes. Copious use of eye make up, which covers the glands on the eyelid, is another common cause of the disease. "Sufferers of thyroid disorder, diabetes and other inflammatory conditions are also more likely to suffer with dry eye," said Dr. Maharaj. "There's also a large amount of data that suggests that improper contact lens care can exacerbate any underlying dry eye condition."

Ways to combat

Eat as much oily fish as possible and try to get hold of some triglyceride form omega 3 supplement. "It's more

highly absorbed by the body than most over the counter ethyl ester form omega 3 products and therefore has a more significant impact on oil secretion and tear production," said Dr. Maharaj. "I recommend 2.5 grams per day at a minimum of 3 months in order to be effective." Be mindful of your blinks. "I suggest doing forceful, purposeful blinks, making sure that the eyelids are closed, and squeezing those glands," said Dr. Maharaj. "Glands are like every other part of the body: if you don't use them, you lose them." Proper hydration is imperative; "For all of us that get up early and down two cups of coffee, which is going to dehydrate you significantly, replenishing liquids and fluids is extremely important," explained Dr. Maharaj. Medical treatments Preventative care in the form of eyelid cleaning is the most effective tool in the fight against dry eye disease. "Clinical cleaning or 'debridement' of your eyelids is a new technique that clears the pathway to your glands," said Dr. Maharaj.

"It's the best thing that you can do because it reduces the inflammatory burden and increases the glands' performance." In the early stages of dry eye disease topical drops recommended by your eye doctor are usually the most effective and suitable treatment of symptoms. "I would favour non-preserved eye drops and stay away from the 'red free drops', which can actually cause longer term damage," said Dr. Maharaj "Hyaluronate drops in a multi dose bottle offers superior comfort and stability to the tears. They are definitely best for the ocular surface in the early and advanced stages." For more advanced stages of the disease there are in-office specialized heated pressure treatments for the glands (FDA approved for dry eye), as well as prescribed oral and topical drugs that can decrease inflammation and stimulate the gland to start producing the necessary oils.

JOE ROSENGARTEN  
editorial@mediaplanet.com



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EDITOR'S PICK



“The more you isolate yourself, the more your thinking ability declines because you are not giving your brain the exercise that comes with the demands of social interaction.”

VISION AND HEARING  
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**Designer:** Melanie Finnern

**Contributors:** Benita Alto, Rex Banks, CNIB, Susan Nelson-Oxford, Dr. Shalu Pal, Jillian Price, Joe Rosengarten

**Send all inquiries to**  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

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# MODERN EYE CARE



WITH OVER 400 OPTOMETRISTS WORKING AT 210 LOCATIONS ACROSS CANADA, FYIDOCATORS HAS BEEN LEADING AN EVOLUTION IN OPTOMETRY SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2008.

The way that we receive our eye care in Canada is changing. Since its inception in 2008, FYidocitors has been leading an evolution in optometry by creating a model that pursues excellence through a combination of investing in new technology and new locations and, at the same time, ensuring that the needs of each individual patient are a number one priority.

## Changing Face of the Industry

President and Chief Executive Officer of FYidocitors, Dr. Al Ulsifer, was already running a successful optometry practice with 8 locations before he founded FYidocitors in 2008. But he wasn't happy with the direction that the eye care industry was heading.

"I'd observed a lot of things happening in eye care: there was less focus on eye health and more focus on materials and brand names," explains Dr. Ulsifer. "We were witnessing a commoditization of eye care."

The industry was changing; losing perspective of what was important, and individual optometrists didn't have the clout or financial backing to turn things around. Dr. Ulsifer began thinking about starting a new organization, one that would have the ability to strive to provide excellent eye care as it's main priority, but also allow independent optometrists to be able to compete in the market place amongst the bigger corporations.

"A change in the technology used in the manufacturing of lenses allowed us to not only vertically integrate into the industry, but also offer unique optical products," says Dr. Ulsifer.

This technological development enabled Dr. Ulsifer and his colleagues to come together and build their own manufacturing and distribution facility. "It meant that we could offer a better value proposition to our patients than we could as individual optometrists on our own," he says.

## A Unique Approach

FYidocitors is the only optical corporation in the world that is owned completely by the doctors, and this unique model means that

every business decision is made with an eye care focus in mind.

"We're a bunch of independent eye care professionals that weren't necessarily trained in business, but we wanted to put together a company that is dedicated to eye care and preserving vision," says Dr. Ulsifer. "We go out of our way to meet the needs of our patients."

The vast majority of the doctors at FYidocitors are shareholders so it's a real team effort, with patient care coming first and foremost. By combining their expertise, finance and hard-earned reputations with the unique advantages of the FYidocitors model, FYidocitors is in position to push the levels of eye care in Canada to new heights.

"One of the challenges that individual optometrists face is keeping up with the costs of investing in new technology," says Dr. Ulsifer. "The FYidocitors business model allows us to invest in a way that we just wouldn't have been able to do on our own."

## Investing for Improvement

In just five years, FYidocitors has grown into one of the largest providers of eye wear and eye care in Canada, with over 400 optometrists working at 210 locations across the country. Dr. Ulsifer believes that FYidocitors' dedication to raising eye care standards, along with their commitment to heavy investment in the latest technology has had far reaching benefits for all Canadians.

As well as investing in optomaps®, ultra-wide digital retina scanners that capture more than 80% of your retina in one panoramic image (traditional methods typically reveal up to 20% of your retina at one time), FYidocitors also offers its patients access to the new gold standard in detecting retinal disorders, Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT).

"When you invest in technology it makes others in your industry raise their games," says Dr. Ulsifer. "It's made our competitors better, and that results in Canadians getting better eye care and, importantly, earlier detection of eye disease."

## Take Responsibility

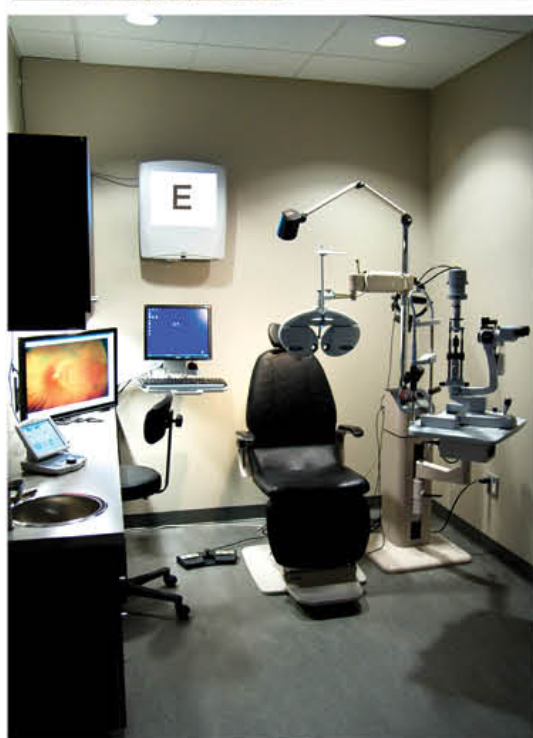
So, the improvements in eye care are there for all to see, but these advancements are worthless if Canadians don't make the most of them. "People have to be reminded that they can lose their vision without experiencing pain," says Dr. Ulsifer. "Having 20/20 vision

doesn't mean that you have perfectly healthy eyes. The sad reality is that with most eye diseases, by the time your vision becomes affected, it's already too late to correct it."

The solution is simple: "Make sure that you get regular eye health exams!"



DR. ALAN  
ULSIFER,  
PRESIDENT  
AND CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER



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INSIGHT

TIPS

How can I tell if my child has hearing loss?

All newborns in Ontario have their hearing screened while they are still at the hospital, but some hearing losses can happen over time or as the result of illness, infection or the side effects of certain medications.

All children develop at their own pace, but trust your instincts and talk to your doctor if you have concerns.



TELL YOUR DOCTOR AT THE SIX-MONTH CHECKUP

- If your baby does not startle at sudden, loud noises
- If your baby does not turn or look to find a familiar voice
- If your baby does not babble or make sounds



TELL YOUR DOCTOR AT THE TWELVE-MONTH CHECKUP

- If your baby does not respond to his/her name
- If your baby does not say three or more words, or combine sounds as if talking



TELL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOUR TWO YEAR-OLD

- Is not able to follow simple instructions
- Is not understandable when he or she speaks

“What can I do if my child has hearing loss?”

Ninety percent of children with hearing loss are born to parents with typical hearing. It's normal to feel shock but you are not alone; help is available.

**Gather information**  
Children with hearing loss can learn to listen and speak. Talk to your doctor about hearing aids, cochlear implants and other assistive devices and whether they could be of benefit to your child.

**Get on your child's level**  
Sit on the floor with them as they play and make eye contact as you speak. Plant the seeds of spoken communication.

**Get support**  
You are not the only parent who has a child with hearing loss. Connect with other moms and dads through community organizations.

**BENITA AALTO, VOICE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN**  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

# SAY NO TO NOISE

Exiting the subway, I merge in to the din of the city and am struck by a jumble of confusing, loud clamor; impatient commuters honking their horns, machines blasting obliviously into the concrete, an after-hours club sweeping its last straggler into the street on an invisible wave of bass notes. Noise is seemingly inescapable. It's pervasive and yes, it affects us.

There is a growing concern among audiologists and other healthcare providers about the ever-increasing effect noise has on our hearing and overall health. Noise is defined as any unwanted sound; continued exposure to loud noise will cause hearing loss. But that's not where it ends. Noise can affect us on physiological levels causing sleep disturbance, elevated blood pressure and even gastrointestinal changes.

**Noise-induced hearing loss**  
Noise is also a major source of annoyance and can impact our mental health. Intrusive noise can cause disputes between neighbors leading to acts of aggression. Even seemingly mundane noise that is not necessarily hazardous to our hearing can cause stress and tension.

And when it comes to hearing loss, noise is one of the leading causes. Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) can occur after a single exposure to a very loud sound. It can also be the result of long-term overexposure to moderate or loud sounds. NIHL is cumulative, permanent and irreversible but it's also preventable.

**Protect yourself**  
Establishing sensible listening habits can help protect your hearing. Whether it is recreational, sporting or occupational noise, wear ear protection. Turn down the volume on radios and personal listening devices such as MP3 players and iPods. Always try to distance yourself from the source of any loud noise and reduce the amount of time you spend in noisy environments.

If you have been exposed to loud noise, I suggest the remove—reduce—rest strategy. The first line of



Noise from your every-day surroundings affects both your physical and mental state  
PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

“Noise is seemingly inescapable. It's pervasive and yes, it affects us.”

defense is to remove as much noise as possible from your environment. Reduce noise levels and find a quiet space where you can give your auditory system a rest.

**Seek help**  
If you have difficulty understand-

ing speech or following a conversation with background noise, have ringing or buzzing in your ears, or if sounds seem muffled—you are probably experiencing hearing loss. Make an appointment with an audiologist to get your hearing checked and get advice on how to

manage your hearing loss and how to prevent more from occurring.

**REX BANKS, M.A.CCC-A. REG. CASLPO**  
CHIEF AUDIOLOGIST, THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

## A guide to soft contact lens care

**With so many contact lens products and solutions available today it can be hard to know if you are doing the best for your eyes.**

If you want to remain a contact lens wearer for decades to come, make sure you have the basics down.

**Hand washing**  
Always wash and dry your hands with a lint free towel before handling your lenses. Water should never come in contact with your lenses. Water changes the chemistry of your lenses, causes dehydration, alters the shape, changes the visual quality and can increase bacterial growth on the lenses.

**Lens cleaning**  
Both multipurpose solutions (MPS) and hydrogen peroxide based solu-



**Dr. Shalu Pal, OD, FFAO**  
COMPREHENSIVE EYE CARE SPECIALTY CONTACT LENS FITTING OF DISEASED CORNEAS

tions work well to clean contact lenses when used correctly. The most effective way to use a MPS is to rub the lenses for 10 seconds, rinse them and then soak them overnight in fresh solution.

**Case cleaning**  
Cases should be cleaned and dried daily after lenses are inserted. The cases should be replaced every 3 months to prevent bacterial contamination of the case. Certain lens cases containing silver ions are to be left moist, as long as the case re-

mains wet, the silver ions released when in contact with applicable solution, will continue to kill germs. This type of solution may help if your eyes are left irritated after activities like watching TV or working on the computer. Cases should not be left on the bathroom counter but put in the cabinet to avoid particles from the flush of a toilet settling on the case.

**Replacing lenses**  
Every brand of soft lenses has a recommended safety period. The period starts from the moment the contact is removed from the vacuum sealed package. When your lenses feel uncomfortable, your eyes are telling you that they are hurt. Pushing your contacts until this point is slowly damaging your eyes. Programs, Apps and reminders on smart phones can be used to keep you on track.

**Sleeping in lenses**  
If you fall asleep often in your lenses, make sure you are wearing lenses that are safe to sleep in. If your eyes and lenses are dry when you wake up resist the urge to take your lenses out. Place a drop of moisture in the eye and allow the contact to rehydrate. Your eye care professional can recommend safe drops for your brand of lens.

**Dry contact lenses**  
Many people believe dryness and discomfort are normal for contact lens users. But it doesn't have to be. There are many things that can be done to improve your comfort. See your eye care professional for advice.

**Eye exams**  
A contact lens wearer should have their eyes examined once a year. The fitting relationship of your lens and your cornea must be monitored to prevent dryness, irritation, discomfort, redness, oxygen deprivation and infections. Switching brands should be done under the care of a professional. A lens may feel fine but could be doing damage to your eyes.

**DR. SHALU PAL**  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

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# FIGHTING STIGMAS

A discussion with Lou Ferrigno on overcoming the social and physical barriers of hearing loss.

**Mediaplanet** For our readers who are not familiar with your story, please explain to us at what age you were diagnosed with hearing loss, and what your symptoms were.

**Lou Ferrigno** I was diagnosed with hearing loss at the age of three. My mother noticed that I did not respond to any clapping or noise. However, my parents believe that I lost my hearing closer to birth, due to an infection brought on by meningitis.

**MP** How did hearing loss as a child affect your personality development?

**LF** As a child my hearing loss made me very introverted, and I felt socially awkward around other people.

**MP** What advice would you give to those who suffer from partial hearing loss?

**LF** Not to feel sorry for yourself. Maximise what you have, work on your speech and go out and get the best hearing aid for your hearing loss. Don't waste any time in addressing your hearing health issues.

**MP** Did you ever have to combat stigmas associated with hearing loss as a child or young adult? If so, how did those experiences affect your drive towards achieving your amazing suc-

cess as an actor and body builder?

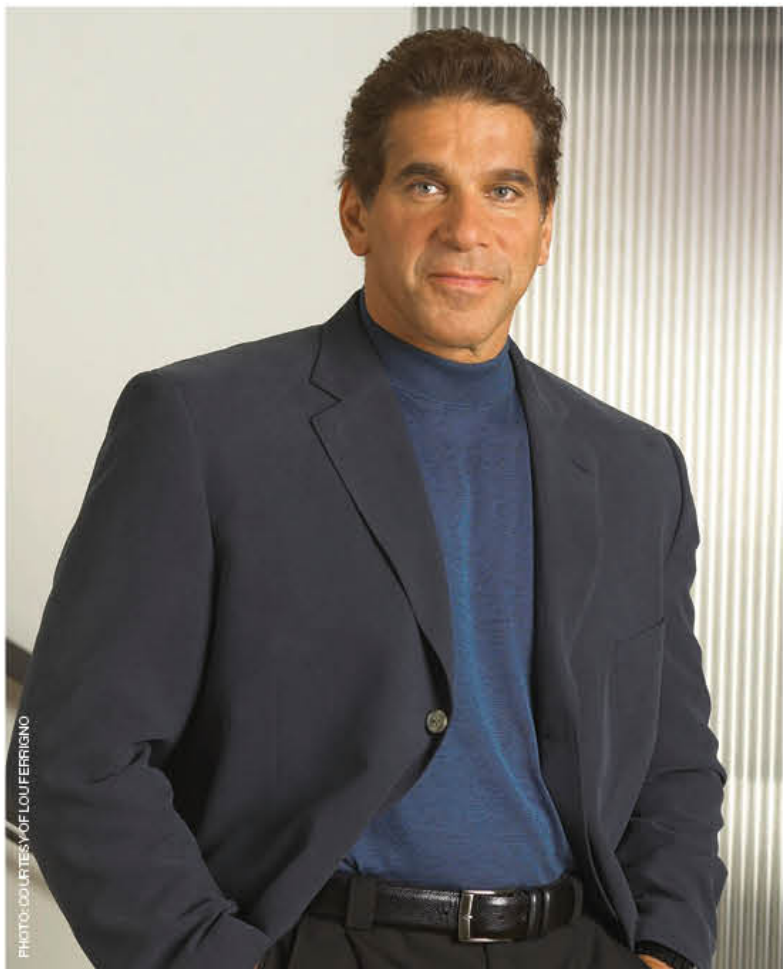
**LF** I felt rejected—they use to call me names such as Deaf Louie and Deaf Lou. I took the positive route and never felt sorry for myself. I was fascinated with power as a kid; I would read comic books and that gave me the drive—I knew that was my platform to survive.

**MP** It has been said that working out affects all aspects of your body, including brain function, vision and hearing. Based upon this assumption, do you feel that your athletic endeavors affected your cognitive ability to pick up sound cues?

**LF** One thing had nothing to do with the other. I think that my training made me much more aware and alert of my environment and surroundings.

**MP** The advancement of hearing aid technology has grown rapidly over the past few decades, and nobody would know that better than you, having worn a hearing aid for the majority of your life. How have these advancements in the industry affected your experience with hearing loss?

**LF** The advancements continue to help my speech pattern tremendously and my hearing is always



improving. However, it comes down to the fact that you have to be brave enough to wear hearing aids. There's always the worry of being rejected or that people won't want to be seen with you. Technology has gotten better, I'm able to hear clearly and it has helped all aspects of my life. I wear hearing aids in both ears now.

**MP** How have you overcome challenges associated with hearing loss

editorial@mediaplanet.com



Staying social leads to healthy aging and improved cognitive functioning  
PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

## Hearing loss and healthy aging

**Did you know that untreated age related hearing loss has been associated with physical and mental decline?**

You spend so much energy and brain power trying to figure out what someone said; you don't have the resources to 'think' about the message. Friends and family are getting tired of talking with you, despite your best efforts to understand

what they have said. You become more and more socially isolated and inactive. Television, especially the news, becomes your best friend because you can control the volume, the newscaster is looking directly at "you" and you are listening in the quiet privacy of your home. You gradually stop going out because you get stressed trying to hear in noisy places. But did you know, the more you isolate yourself, the more your thinking ability declines because

you are not giving your brain the exercise that comes with the demands of social interaction.

### Staying social

Two of three adults over 70 years of age have a hearing loss that interferes with communication and it is estimated that 3/4 of them have done nothing about it. Large population research studies, have confirmed that healthy aging depends on keeping socially engaged and active and your ability to hear and communicate is vitally linked to your social activities. Research also shows that unmanaged hearing loss is related to an increased risk of falling and is linked to the timing of the onset of Alzheimer's disease. Isolation, injuries from falls and Alzheimer's Disease are 3 of the top 4 reasons for admission to long term care facilities.

### Addressing health issues

Many things can affect your hearing such as a decline of physical hearing structures, ear wax, medical conditions, and infections. It is important to begin by talking to your family doctor about your hearing loss. Your doctor may suggest that you see an audiologist. An audiologist will test your hearing, work with you in find-

ing solutions that are unique to your needs and coach you in finding ways to communicate more effectively in all situations.

### Communicating effectively

There are things you can do right now that will help. Let people know you have a hearing problem; ask people to face you and to speak more slowly, clearly and louder without shouting; pay attention to facial expressions or gestures; request a seat in a quiet part of the restaurant, perhaps in a booth; let the person talking know when you do not understand and ask them to reword a sentence and try again.

Remember, optimal hearing involves personal development. Your audiologist can work with you to find the right strategies to get back your social and leisure activities which in turn will assist with improvements in your physical and mental function.

SUSAN NELSON-OXFORD, M.SC.  
REGISTERED AUDIOLOGIST, PRESIDENT,  
CANADIAN ACADEMY OF AUDIOLOGY  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

### Q & A

#### How to shop for your hearing aid

**Q: What are the different types of hearing aids on the market right now?**

**A:** Hearing aids continue to range in size, style and level of power. The results of your hearing test are still the most important piece of information your qualified hearing professional will use to determine which hearing aid is right for you. Today's hearing aids range from very small in-the-ear devices to larger over-the-ear devices. Some newer types of hearing aids available include devices that are inserted very deeply in the ear canal and are advertised as being "invisible" as well as "open-fit" technology that offer the wearer a very discrete, lightweight and extremely comfortable hearing aid and consists of a tiny wire inserted into the ear canal attached to a small piece that tucks in behind the ear.

**Q: What are some recent developments in hearing aid technology?**

**A:** I would have to say that the future of hearing aids is Bluetooth compatibility and utilizing that technology to enhance the accessibility of hearing aids with other media devices. For example, newer hearing aids can now be hooked up to your television, stereo, telephone, computer and other media devices completely wirelessly. Your hearing aid becomes the earpiece through which you hear the sound from these devices. Moreover, the sound is tailored to the user's hearing loss and preferences. This kind of accessibility opens up a whole new world for hearing aid users allowing them to regain enjoyment in the simple things that we can take for granted such as talking to a loved one on the phone or watching our favourite TV show and not missing the punch line!

**Q: How long do hearing aids generally last?**

**A:** Hearing aids generally last anywhere between 3-5 years. This is not to say that all aids will need replacing by 5 yrs, but with technology changing so rapidly, it may be that your hearing aids are outdated by this time. Improved digital sound processing and noise reduction are just two of the reasons why someone might want to upgrade their hearing aids. If your hearing aids are over 3 years old, you may want to sit down with your hearing health care professional and ask the question "Is there anything available that could improve my hearing?"

JILLIAN PRICE, CHIEF AUDIOLOGIST,  
LISTENUP! CANADA  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

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