

OUTSTANDING DOCTORS OUTSTANDING CARE



DAY CARE AND EAR, NOSE & THROAT PROBLEMS

By Sandy D. Sule, M.D.

Medline, a service of the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, reports that day care centers pose some degree of an increased health risk for children, because of the exposure to other children who may be sick.

When your child is in a day care center, the risk is greatest for viral upper respiratory infection (affecting the nose, throat, mouth, voice box) and the common cold, ear infections, and diarrhea. Studies suggest that the average child will get eight to ten colds per year, lasting ten to fourteen days each. At the same time, children in a day care environment, exposed to the exchange of upper respiratory tract viruses every day, are expected to have three to ten episodes of otitis (inflammation in the ear) annually - four times the incidence of children staying at home. However, some studies suggest that being exposed to all the germs in day care actually IMPROVES your child's immune system.

Can you prevent your child from becoming sick at a day care center?

The short answer is no. Exposure to sick children will increase the likelihood that your child may "catch" the same illness, particularly with the common cold. However, you can take steps to prevent unnecessary illnesses.

Teach your child to wash his or her hands before eating and after using the toilet. Infection is spread the most by children

putting dirty toys and hands in their mouths, so check your day care's hygiene cleaning practices.

Have your child examined by a physician before enrollment in a day care center or school. During the examination, the physician will:

- Look for otitis (inflammation) in the ear. This is an indicator of future ear infections.
- Review with you any allergies your child may have. This will assist in determining if the diet offered at the day care center may be harmful to your child.

You can take steps to prevent unnecessary illness.

- Examine the child's tonsils for infection and size. Enlarged tonsils could indicate that your child may not be getting a healthy sleep at night, resulting in a tired condition during the day.

When should your child remain at home instead of day care or school?

The primary rule is to keep your own children at home if they are sick. Some guidelines to follow are:

- When your child has a temperature higher than 100 degrees, keep him/her at home. A fever is a sign of potentially contagious infection, even if the

child feels fine. Schools often advise keeping the child at home until a fever-free period has existed for 24 hours.

- When other children in the day care facility have a known contagious infection, such as chicken pox, strep throat or conjunctivitis, keep your child at home.

- Children taking antibiotics should be kept at home until they have taken the medicine for one or two days.

- If your child is vomiting or has diarrhea, he or she should not be around other children. Other signs of illness are an inability to take fluids, weakness or lethargy, sunken eyes, a depressed soft spot on top of infant's head, crying without tears, and dry mouth.

Always alert the day care center manager when your child is ill, and include the nature of the illness.

For millions of families, day care is a necessity. Monitoring the health of your own child is key to preventing unnecessary sickness. When illness does occur, do not hesitate to have your child examined by a physician.

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The National Institute on Aging reports that about one-third of Americans between the ages of 65 and 74 have hearing problems, and that number rises to nearly half for those over the age of 75. Unfortunately, only about 20% of all people who need hearing devices actually get them. One reason why people don't pursue hearing devices is because of friends' or relatives' bad experiences. These bad experiences may be because they were fit with the wrong level of technology. Therefore, it is important for you to make sure that you understand and receive the right level of technology.

Determining the appropriate level of technology is determined by an individual's listening lifestyle, i.e., what sort of listening environments they are in on a daily basis. Level of technology is based on the number of features in a hearing device: The more features, the higher the level of technology. When describing level of technology, there are a few key features that come to mind, namely: directional microphones, noise reduction, and adaptive feedback cancellation.

SMART HEARING SYSTEMS: These Aren't Your Parents' Hearing Devices!

Directional Microphones

Most hearing devices have what are called omni-directional microphones. That is, all sounds in the environment are amplified the same regardless of where the sounds are coming from. This is important, for example, when you are sitting in your home and you want to hear someone knocking on your back door or walking up behind you. This is ideal for quiet environments, but not so good for noisy situations, such as restaurants. Therefore, researchers invented directional microphones.

Directional microphones amplify what is in front of you and reduce what is behind you. This is important when sitting in a restaurant and you want to hear the person you are sitting across from and not the people at the table behind you. Directional microphones have been clinically proven to improve speech understanding in noise.

Noise Reduction

Many people complain that hearing devices amplify everything, including background noise. Therefore, researchers developed noise reduction. How it works: Hearing devices analyze different pitch ranges for noise. If noise is identified, the hearing device turns down the gain in that particular range, thereby reducing the loudness of the noise. Unfortunately, no hearing device can completely block out background noise; however, noise reduction can reduce

the overall loudness of noise and improve listening comfort in noisy situations.

Adaptive Feedback

Cancellation

Almost everyone has heard someone's hearing device feeding back (squealing). Feedback is caused by sound leaving the hearing device, going back into the microphone, getting re-amplified, leaving the hearing device, going back into the microphone, and so forth. This loop results in the squealing sound that many people hear; unfortunately, it is usually in a pitch range that is not heard by the hearing device user. To reduce this occurrence, researchers have developed special algorithms that identify squealing and cut it out. Ideally, a hearing device should not squeal when it is positioned in your ear properly and the volume is adjusted appropriately. However, feedback may occur if a phone is brought to the ear or during a hug - that is when adaptive feedback cancellation can be very useful.

These are a few of the major features in today's hearing devices. There are several more available on varying different levels of technology. Again, determining the best level of technology for you is important in improving your experience with hearing devices and your overall quality of life.

To learn more about hearing devices and their features, feel free to contact me by phone at 214.345.5711 or e-mail at jack.scott@texasmedsurg.com to set up an appointment.

Jack M. Scott earned his Ph.D. in Communication Sciences (Audiology) from the University of Texas at Dallas and his B.S. and M.A. from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Scott is licensed in Texas and holds his Certificate of Clinical Competency from the American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Audiology and a member of the American Tinnitus Association. He is an adjunct lecturer at the University of Texas at Dallas and on the board of the Scott Haug Audiology Foundation.

Dr. Scott has served the patients of Texas Medical & Surgical Associates for over 2 years and is one of a select few audiologists in North Texas that have earned their Ph.D. - the highest level of academic achievement in the field of Audiology. He offers a wide range of audiologic and rehabilitative services, including full evaluations, hearing aid evaluations, fittings and counseling, and tinnitus therapy.

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