

# Positive Pulse

Your monthly dose of advice on healthy living

## Ears & Hearing

I'M ALL EARS.



SLOTHILDA.COM

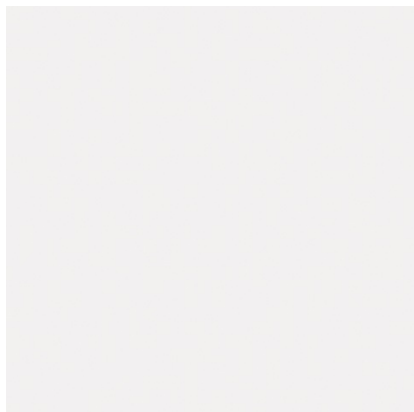
We're back with another issue of Positive Pulse, the e-newsletter for everything to do with healthy living. This month's theme is our ears!

- There are many amazing facts about our ears that we may be unaware of.
- It's very important to protect our ears from hearing loss while out and even in our homes.
- The sounds of nature can be very relaxation and come with many health benefits.

After you're done reading, [don't forget to listen to our webinars every Tuesday! You can find registration links and recordings here.](#)

We are also holding Healthy Lifestyles Project: LIVE events, every Wednesday at 11 AM and Friday at 1 PM. [Register here.](#)

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## Ear Facts

### Balance

- Inside your inner ear is a fascinating maze-like structure known as the vestibular system. Here you'll find three canals filled with fluid and small hair cells that detect the rotational movement of your head, be it up and down, side to side, or tilting.
- Information coming from the vestibular system is processed in the brain and then sent to other organs that need this information, such as the eyes and muscles. This allows us to remain balanced and know what position our body is in. In some situations (i.e. on a boat) different sensory organs, such as the eyes, send contradictory messages to the brain. This is what can then cause us to feel unwell, dizzy, or nauseous.

### Ear Growth

- You may have heard the rumour that our ears and nose are the only parts of our body that continue growing throughout our lives. They do indeed get bigger, but it's not because they're literally growing
- It's most likely a combination of natural ageing and the effects of gravity. As we age, our ears appear to be getting bigger but it's because the cartilage in our ears slowly breaks down, and gravity makes them elongate over time.

### Self-Cleaning

- Ear wax gets a bad rap but the truth is, it's a completely natural (and essential) part of our ears.
- Normal ear wax production is a sign that your ears are doing a great job at cleaning themselves. This self-cleaning ability helps keep the ears moisturised and protected.

### Ears Never Sleep

- Our ears still hear 100% of the sounds around us when we are asleep, even if we're not aware of it. It's our brain that's responsible for processing all the sounds around us and making sense of them.
- The sleeping brain continues generating neural responses to surrounding events, but the sleeper is merely in "standby" mode as the brain continues to monitor for relevant signals.

### Pressure Changes

- Have you ever wondered what makes your ears "pop" on an airplane? Our middle ear has a certain amount of pressure around it, and a small tube (the Eustachian tube) that connects our ear to the back of our throat helps keep air pressure



equal on both sides of the eardrum. This makes sure that the pressure does not build up when the surrounding air pressure changes (like on an aeroplane or somewhere else at a high altitude).

- The Eustachian tubes then open to relieve some of the pressure when we swallow, which equalises the pressure inside and outside our ear. That's what makes them "pop."

## Two Ears For A Reason

- Having two ears helps us figure out which direction sounds are coming from. If you have hearing loss in one ear, you can probably notice that it's hard to decipher where a particular sound is located. Therefore, it's important to use two hearing aids instead of one when hearing loss is present in both ears, to help locate warning sounds around you, navigate safely through traffic, and walk safely across the road.
- With our ears playing such an important role in our lives, it's important to take care of our hearing health. If you're worried about your hearing in any way, book a free appointment with one of your hearing care experts today.

SOURCE: <https://www.hiddenhearing.co.uk/hearing-blog/hearing-loss/10-interesting-facts-about-your-ears>



## Prevent Hearing Loss

### Hearing Loss & Cognitive Decline

- A new report published by the Lancet Commission shows that untreated hearing loss is a risk factor for dementia. In fact, moderate hearing impairment can increase one's dementia risk by up to three times.
- This could be because hearing loss leads to lowered mental stimulation, isolation, and depression - all of which contribute to accelerated cognitive decline.

### Ear Hairs

- The ear has tiny nerve fibers - or hair cells - that help us maintain balance, but they're also there to help us hear. These delicate hair cells are very sensitive and can be easily damaged to the point where they break. Once they break, they don't grow back.
- Some of the main reasons for this type of hair cell loss include sound exposure, natural ageing, and ear infections. To avoid your risk of hearing loss, it's important to take care of your ears by avoiding loud noises when possible or by protecting your ears with ear plugs or ear defenders when exposed to excessive noise

### Protect Your Ears At Home

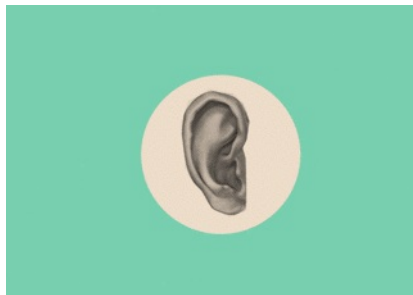
- Turn down the volume of the TV, radio, or music.
- If listening to loud music, take listening breaks to reduce your exposure.
- Use quieter products (power tools, toys, recreational vehicles) whenever they are available.

- Reduce equipment noise by replacing worn, loose, or unbalanced machine parts. Keep equipment well lubricated and maintained.
- Use hearing protection devices (such as earplugs and earmuffs) when you cannot avoid loud sounds.
- Make hearing protection convenient. Stash earplugs in your car or workshop for easy access.
- Keep children away from loud music or equipment at home.

## Protect Your Ears Away From Home

- Move or stay far away from the loudest sound-producing source—such as loudspeakers or cannons at college stadiums—especially if attending with children.
- Limit the length of time of exposure to loud sounds.
- Pay attention to signs and information flyers warning of possible loud noise and the use of hearing protection.
- Bring hearing protection devices with you. Keep them in your car, pockets, or other easy to access place.

SOURCE: [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing\\_loss/how\\_do\\_i\\_prevent\\_hearing\\_loss.html#:~:text=Use%20hearing%20protection%20devices%20\(such,music%20or%20equipment%20at%20home](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/how_do_i_prevent_hearing_loss.html#:~:text=Use%20hearing%20protection%20devices%20(such,music%20or%20equipment%20at%20home)



## Nature Sounds and Relaxation

### Why Natural Sounds are Relaxing

- Researchers said they'd pinpointed a scientific explanation for why sounds from nature have such a restorative effect on our psyche: According to a study published in the journal *Scientific Reports* in March 2017, sounds of nature physically alter our brains' connections, reducing our body's natural fight-or-flight instinct.
- To investigate the connection between the brain, the body, and background noise, the researchers recruited 17 healthy adults to receive functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans while listening to a series of five-minute soundscapes of natural and artificial environments.
- Participants also performed a task to measure their attention and reaction time during each soundscape. Their heart rates were monitored as well to indicate changes in their autonomic nervous systems—the system of organs involved in involuntary processes such as breathing, blood pressure, temperature, metabolism, and digestion.
- When they studied the fMRI results, listening to artificial sounds was associated with patterns of inward-focused attention, while nature sounds prompted more external-focused attention.
- Inward-focused attention can include worrying and rumination about things specific to one's self—patterns that have been linked to conditions involving psychological stress (including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder). Participants' reaction times were slower when they listened to artificial sounds than natural ones.
- Overall, nature sounds were associated with a decrease in the body's sympathetic response (which causes that "fight-or-flight" feeling) and an increase in parasympathetic response—the one that helps the body relax and function in normal circumstances and is sometimes referred to as the "rest-digest" response.



# Music Therapy with Your Favorite Sounds

- In a noisy world, giving our ears and minds rest from the sounds and ambient noise around us can be difficult. While it's hard to control the sounds we constantly take in everyday, being aware of our favorite sounds can be a first step to intentionally surrounding ourselves with these.
- Joanna explores some ways to think about these important sounds via an activity from Lisa Currie's book, The Positivity Kit.



SOURCE: <https://www.health.com/condition/stress/why-nature-sounds-are-relaxing>

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## Let's Stay Healthy!



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Looking to learn more about healthy living?  
Email [NJSAP@ArcNJ.org](mailto:NJSAP@ArcNJ.org) or call 732-749-8514 to

schedule a virtual training.

You can also visit the NJ Self-Advocacy Project [Training homepage](#) to submit a training request.



Don't see what you're looking for? We can create a custom training based on the needs and interest of your group!



*The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey*

The [Healthy Lifestyles Project \(HLP\)](#) is a program of The Arc of New Jersey and receives funding through a grant awarded by [The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey](#).

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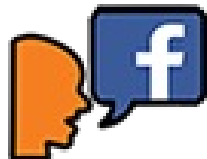
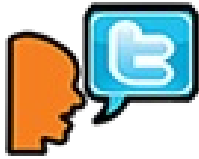
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with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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