


Hearing Aids

Q Other than wearing a hearing aid, is there medication or training procedures that can help treat my hearing problems?

A It depends on your type of hearing loss. There are essentially three types of hearing loss: conductive, sensorineural, and mixed. Oftentimes conductive or mixed hearing loss is medically treatable. The majority of the hearing impaired population suffers from sensorineural hearing loss, which is best treated with hearing aids. The Listening and Communication Enhancement (LACE) program is an auditory program that is frequently recommended in addition to amplification. LACE will help develop skills and strategies to deal with difficult listening situations. When speech is audible with hearing aids, but background noise interferes, auditory rehabilitation is helpful. There is now even an iPhone hearing aid app that can stream a phone conversation directly into hearing aids. Streaming a phone conversation directly into hearing aids often improves clarity over the phone because of binaural hearing (hearing with both ears). The app can adjust volume and even locate hearing aids.


 **Megan Johnson, Au. D.**
Johnson Audiology
Locations in Chattanooga
on Gunbarrel Road and
Cartersville, Georgia
423.650.4293, johnsonaudiology.com



Plantar Fasciitis

Q I run a lot and have flat arches. How can I avoid plantar fasciitis?

A Plantar fasciitis is an inflammation of the fibrous tissue that helps hold the arch up, usually occurring from overuse or chronic repetitive strain. If you look at the arch of the foot like an archery bow on its side, the bowstring is the plantar fascia. It extends from the heel through to the toes. It is made of the same material that ligaments and tendons are made of and is fairly strong. With repetitive chronic use or overuse, it can become irritated where it inserts on the heel bone. With a flattened foot, the bow is also flattened out. This can put strain on the plantar fascia and cause chronic inflammation. Recognizing the signs and symptoms and treating them early is key to preventing the progression of plantar fasciitis and what people call “heel spurs” (small bony growths on the back or underside of the heel). In this instance, arch supports or orthotics are usually the best solutions. They help unload the plantar fascia, but even more than that, they keep the bones of the foot and the arch in a more normal position. With the orthotics in place, stretching of the plantar fascia and the Achilles tendon can help to keep the plantar fascia supple and protect it from further injury. Should you find yourself suffering from heel pain, you should also try stretching, over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication, and ice. They can be very helpful in alleviating the symptoms. If the symptoms of plantar fasciitis last more than 6 weeks, it is important to see a foot and ankle specialist. In the vast majority of cases, treatment will be successful.

 **John Chrostowski, M.D., Foot and Ankle Specialist**
Center for Sports Medicine & Orthopaedics
Locations in Hixson, East Brainerd, Cleveland,
and on McCallie Avenue downtown
423.805.9779, sportmed.com

Mercury-Based Fillings

Q I’m worried about the safety of my old mercury-based fillings. Can I get these replaced with a mercury-free version?

A Thanks to technological advances, dentists and patients today have several choices when it comes to selecting materials to fill cavities. Among the choices are natural tooth-colored materials such as resin-based composite fillings and more traditional dental fillings such as those made of metal amalgam. The advent of new materials for fillings, such as composite resin, has been beneficial, especially in terms of aesthetics and strength. Composite resin is a mixture of plastic and powdered glass that mimics the natural appearance of the tooth. Composite resin fillings can be used to make cosmetic improvements to your teeth, such as changing the color of



your teeth, restoring decayed teeth, repairing chipped teeth, replacing existing fillings, closing gaps between the teeth, and making teeth appear more even. One benefit of tooth-colored resin fillings is that they look more aesthetically pleasing since they match your natural tooth color and appearance. Also,

less drilling is required, so not as much tooth structure needs to be removed. Composite fillings bond to the tooth giving it greater strength, which helps prevent breaks. Most importantly, composites are mercury-free. Mercury in metal or amalgam fillings is viewed by some as toxic. Amalgam fillings are not uncommon as many dentist in the past used the mercury-based material as a constant. However, many people are electing to have existing amalgam fillings replaced due to breakdown of the material as well as the mercury that they contain. Other than composite fillings, a porcelain restoration is the only other option when replacing amalgam fillings.


 **Kristen Conner, DMD**
Signature Smiles
Office Located in Hixson
on 4806 Hixson Pike
423.702.4030,
signature-smiles.com

The Flu

Q How can I best protect my family during the 2014-2015 flu season?

A One of the most effective ways to protect yourself and your family from the flu is to have every family member receive an influenza vaccination. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends receiving a flu shot as soon as they become available. I suggest picking a specific day or week in September to visit your pharmacy to receive vaccinations, since the vaccine can last up to 8 months. Walgreens offers influenza vaccinations every day during the flu season with no appointment necessary, often with short wait times. Discuss with your pharmacist which product is best for each member of the family. The flu vaccine comes in two forms: a flu shot and a nasal spray. The flu shot contains killed (inactive) viruses and is approved for people age 6 months and older. The nasal spray flu vaccine uses live, weakened flu viruses instead of dead ones and is approved

for healthy people aged 2 through 49 years. It is also important to remind all family members to practice good hand hygiene by proper hand washing. Utilizing these two suggestions should help protect you and your family this flu season.

 **Andrew S. Crowe, Pharm.D.**
Walgreens Pharmacy
Located at 110 North
Market Street
423.752.8104, walgreens.com

