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*"Today's state-of-the-art hearing aids should be programmed to the individual's specific hearing loss requirements in order to provide good levels of benefit and customer satisfaction."*

*~ Sergei Kochkin*

## BHI - WARNING OF OVER-THE-COUNTER HEARING AIDS

**Washington, DC.** The Better Hearing Institute (BHI) is warning consumers of the inherent risks associated with purchasing over-the-counter, one-size-fits-all hearing aids instead of consulting a hearing healthcare professional. Hearing loss is sometimes the symptom of a serious underlying medical problem. All 50 states require that consumers use a credentialed hearing care professional to purchase hearing aids.

BHI also points out that hearing devices that are purchased over-the-counter or Internet without the consultation of a hearing healthcare professional may result in the devices not being accurately customized to the specific hearing needs of the individual.

"Today's state-of-the-art hearing aids should be programmed to the individual's specific hearing loss requirements in order to provide good levels of benefit and customer satisfaction," says Sergei Kochkin, BHI's Executive Director. "The process requires a complete in-person hearing assessment in a sound booth; the training and skills of a credentialed and licensed audiologist in order to prescriptively fit the hearing aids using sophisticated computer programs; and appropriate in-person follow-up and counseling. This is not possible when consumers purchase one-size-fits-all hearing aids over the Internet or elsewhere."

Extensive research shows that individualized hearing health assessments and fittings programmed specifically to the needs of the hearing aid user provide the best chance for optimal hearing enhancement and customer satisfaction. This personal assessment and fitting will make a tremendous difference in the person's ability to hear as well as quality of life.

## More About Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids

The number of Americans with hearing loss has grown to more than 34 million—roughly 11 percent of the U.S. population. Over the past generation, hearing loss among Americans has increased at a rate of 160 percent of U.S. population growth and is one of the most commonly unaddressed health conditions in America today.

Numerous studies have linked untreated hearing loss to a wide range of physical and emotional conditions, including impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks, reduced alertness, increased risk of personal safety, irritability, negativism, anger, fatigue, tension, stress, depression, and diminished psychological and overall health.

Yet the vast majority of people with hearing loss can benefit from hearing aids. In fact, eight out of ten hearing aid users report improvements in their quality of life, according to a survey by BHI of more than 2,000 consumers.

Advances in digital technology have dramatically improved hearing aids in recent years, making them smaller with better sound quality. Designs are modern, sleek, and discreet. Today's hearing aids offer clarity, greater directionality, better speech audibility in a variety of environments, better cell phone compatibility, less whistling and feedback than hearing aids of the past, and greater ruggedness for active lifestyles are common features.

### About BHI

Founded in 1973, BHI conducts research and engages in hearing health education with the goal of helping people with hearing loss benefit from proper treatment.

From: Better Hearing Institute, October 14, 2011.

## Signs of Hearing Loss

Take this quiz to discover whether or not you are experiencing signs of hearing loss:

- Do you often miss certain words?
- Do you frequently ask the speaker to repeat what was said?
- Have family members or friends expressed concern about your hearing?
- Do you avoid certain social situations (the theater, restaurants) because it is difficult to hear?
- Do you have a history of work-related noise exposure?
- Do you have difficulty understanding telephone conversations?
- Do you turn up the radio or television to volume levels that are too loud for others?
- Do you have difficulty following conversations in groups or in the presence of background noise?
- Do you experience ringing or buzzing sounds in one or both ears?

