

Research Reveals Millions of Brits Take Risks with Their Hearing

Submitted by: The PR Room

Friday, 15 December 2017

Almost three quarters of UK adults have never had their hearing checked by a hearing care professional

Copenhagen, Denmark, December 15th, 2017 - A survey of 2,000 adults commissioned by Oticon (<http://www.oticon.global/>), a leader in advanced audiology and hearing aid technology and creator of the world's first internet connected hearing aid, has found that millions of Brits are putting their hearing at risk EVERY day.

The new research also revealed that a staggering one fifth have hearing loss and 21 per cent suffer from tinnitus, which can present as a ringing, buzzing or roaring sound and can often be an extremely debilitating condition.

Attending loud concerts, parties and sporting events, plus operating loud machinery are among the most common activities that the survey respondents reported as causing effects to their hearing.

Almost half of UK adults regularly jeopardise their hearing by listening to music at a high volume – with 28% admitting they do this on a daily basis. One in five respondents similarly could be affecting their hearing by not using hearing protection when working in loud environments.

According to the research four in ten freely admit they risk their hearing - while one fifth don't consider the impact that loud noises can have on it. One third of the respondents admitted that they don't take ANY precautions to protect their hearing when exposed to loud volumes.

Thomas Behrens, Head of Audiology at Oticon said: "The research suggests highly significant numbers of people could be damaging their hearing and perhaps already have. It's easy to take for granted but it's important we look after our hearing, this can be as simple as wearing ear protection when around loud noises."

51% of Brits sometimes find that they can't hear what others are saying to them – while 41 per cent said they have to ask people to repeat themselves or speak louder. And in situations when lots of people are speaking, around half find it tiring trying to follow the conversation.

For those who have reduced hearing, the survey revealed that the most common side effects can include; withdrawal from social situations, difficulty concentrating and feeling stressed.

"Noisy environments can be a real struggle for anyone with hearing difficulties. Consequently, avoiding social situations is a very common outcome of hearing loss. This can leave people feeling very isolated and alone, and can potentially lead to serious health effects including stress and depression. This is why it is so very important to seek medical assistance or to see a hearing specialist," Thomas Behrens continued.

Thomas Behrens also commented: "Hearing loss has a number of side-effects. In fact, there have been several studies which discuss the possibility that hearing loss contributes to the early onset of

Dementia, including the recent study authored by the Lancet (<http://www.thelancet.com/>) commissions on Dementia Prevention, Intervention, and Care[i], which concluded that mid-life hearing loss is the most common modifiable risk factor contributable to Dementia. Hearing loss does not only affect the ability to hear sound, it also puts a strain on the brain as it tries to interpret meaning in words, organise sounds, orient sound direction and refocus, especially in noisy environments such as restaurants.”

Almost three quarters of UK adults have never had their hearing checked by a hearing care professional, despite 22 per cent believing they need to. Whilst a third of Brits admit they are worried about their hearing and 32 per cent said their hearing is getting noticeably worse as they get older.

Forty per cent admit that they prefer to have the volume up high when speaking to people over the phone which could indicate their hearing ability has declined. And almost a third of those polled said that they are asked to turn the volume down when watching TV because it's too loud.

“Hearing can decline slowly over a long period of time which can make it both hard to recognise and easy to ignore – so ideally people would get their hearing checked from time to time, just as they would their eyes,” Thomas Behrens advised.

32% of people with hearing loss that do not wear hearing aids haven't considered that they need to. Whilst the 68% that have considered that they need hearing aids reported that they feel too self-conscious (22%), are worried about the size of the hearing aid (17%) and feel it is a sign of getting old (14%).

“Hearing aids have the reputation of being brown, bulky and generally not cool and this has clearly deterred people from wearing them. Thanks to advances in hearing aid technology, many hearing aids are now small and discreet, fast and dynamic. Oticon hearing aids also work in harmony with the brain to help people hear better with less effort helping them open up to a new world of sound,” Thomas Behrens concluded.

Top 5 events/activities leaving people struggling to hear:

Loud concerts

Night clubs

Standing near a loud speaker

Listening to loud music

Someone shouting in your ear

Top tips to protecting your hearing:

Wear earplugs – and remember they only work if properly fitted in the ear canal

Use ear defenders for kids as it can be hard to properly fit ear plugs

Keep your distance from the big loudspeakers

Use an app to measure the sound level if you are particularly concerned

ENDS

About Oticon

500 million people worldwide suffer from hearing loss. The majority are over the age of 50 while eight percent are under the age of 18. It is Oticon's ambition that our customers - hearing clinics throughout the world - prefer to use our products for people with impaired hearing. Through passion, dedication and professional expertise, Oticon develops and manufactures hearing aids for both adults and children. Oticon supports every kind of hearing loss from mild to severe and we pride ourselves on developing some of the most innovative hearing aids in the market. Headquartered out of Denmark, we are a global company and part of William Demant Holding Group with more than 12,000 employees and revenues of over DKK 12 billion. www.oticon.global

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