

pediatric pointers



Are you ready?

You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout, I'm telling you why—May is coming and that means another Better Hearing and Speech Month (BHSM) is upon us. If you haven't planned your activities to promote "Better Hearing" it's not too late. Whether you serve a mixture of adults and children or primarily adult clients, this is a great opportunity to make better hearing a child-friendly affair.

At Oticon, we constantly receive requests for materials suitable for a classroom presentation on hearing and hearing loss. Why not create a science class lesson for preschool, elementary, middle school or high school students? You most likely have some of the hands-on items in your office, and there is a wealth of colorful printed handouts you can obtain at no charge from hearing instrument manufacturers as well as sources on the Internet.

With iPods all the rage, and concerns among the audiology community about potentially damaging intensity levels, consider developing a school presentation or community event focusing on prevention of hearing loss. ASHA's "Listen to your Buds" program (www.listentoyourbuds.com) targets the 5- to 10-year-old age group about the safe usage of personal audio technology, starting with a fun online "Turn Down the Volume" game. This very extensive Web site, available in English and Spanish, has materials and information for parents, teachers and, of course, audiologists; there is a wide variety of lesson plans and classroom activities developed specially for grades 3 to 8.

The Dangerous Decibels program (www.dangerousdecibels.org) offers a virtual exhibit and a free K-8 Teacher's Resource Guide that includes hands-on science activities about hearing, the physics of sound, and prevention of noise-induced hearing loss. The National Hearing Conservation Association (www.hearingconservation.org) also provides a wide range of resources for educators and children—including an audio simulation of tinnitus.

The Exploratorium Museum in San Francisco features "Listen: Making Sense of Sound," but you don't have to travel there to take advantage of the unique exhibit. Their Web site www.exploratorium.edu provides many innovative and interactive listening activities that can be discussed and performed in the classroom—or featured your office's waiting room or newsletter. The focus here is not hearing conservation, but using one's listening to explore nature, make music, solve problems and other online activities as well as "practice in the world." Armed with these ideas, not only would you be a hit in any classroom, you'd surely be invited back and long remembered as the hearing expert. Remember to leave a "hearing" poster with your name for the teacher or hallway mural.

When talking with a teenage audience, you might get more mileage by first reviewing materials presented by the Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers (www.hear.net), whose mission is the prevention of hearing loss and tinnitus among musicians and music fans, especially teens. An MP3 player, sound level meter, and musician's earplugs would be good items on which to base a demonstration and discussion with this age group. Do you know a 'cool' local musician who might accompany you for a testimonial? Consider distributing free E-A-R plugs to the students; for those teen rocker wannabes, you can make them aware of the benefits of musician's earplugs and perhaps make them a special offer to obtain ER-20s or custom plugs (available from Westone and Etymotic Research). Don't forget the school's marching band or orchestra. The Evergreen Speech and Hearing Clinic in Redmond, WA has created a unique concert event for local teens and musicians called, "Turn It Down—an ear-responsible concert," which promotes hearing preservation in a fun environment.

A "Better Hearing" activity that can bring people into your office is offering free hearing screening for ages 4 and up (most 4-year-olds can readily perform Conditioned Play Audiometry). You can promote this service by mailing out coupons to all your adult clients; encourage them to share the coupons with their kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews and neighbors. Also send the coupons to pediatricians, general practitioners, dentists, eye doctors, preschools, the YMCA, the bookstore, the library, and even local children's stores.

By promoting better hearing, both you and your community will benefit. Maybe we need to have Better Hearing and Speech Month more than once a year. 💰

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