

Noise from page C6

from leisure time activities, especially from sport shooting, but also from loud music, noisy toys, and other manifestations of our 'civilized' society."

Normal hearing depends upon the health of the ear's three components: the inner, the middle and the outer ear. There are three kinds of hearing loss: conductive, neural and sensory. Conductive hearing loss occurs in the outer and middle ear and is most often caused by excessive wax, a damaged ear drum or fluid in the middle ear. Neural hearing loss is caused by damage to the auditory nerve. Sensory hearing loss occurs in the inner ear, or cochlea, and is most often caused by noise damage.

The cochlea contains thousands of tiny hair cells that transmit sound impulses to the auditory nerve. Extended exposure to excessive noise can damage these cells and reduce their ability to transmit sound. Sensory hearing loss is most often permanent.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1998), the maximum exposure time to a sound level of 110 dBA before damage can occur is one minute and 29 seconds. An average band concert measures 120 dBA. Lawn equipment and power tools measure up to 130

dBA, and fireworks at three feet measure 162 dBA. These sounds - including outdoor bands - occur in many neighborhoods, especially around the Fourth of July and other summer holidays.

The League for the Hard of Hearing issues the following early warning signs of noise-induced hearing damage:

- A ringing or buzzing (tinnitus) in the ears immediately after exposure to noise.

- A slight muffling of sounds after exposure, making it difficult to understand people when leave a noisy area.

- Difficulty understanding speech; that is, you can hear all the words, but you can't understand all of them.

- "Ringing, fullness or fuzziness is a sign of real damage from which you may or may not recover," said Seidmann. Fifty million Americans suffer from tinnitus, he added. "Of those, 12 million seek an opinion, and 2 million are severely impaired. The average tinnitus decibel range is 3-15."

Noise complaints

Although neighborhood fireworks don't bother Keim, she does have her pet peeves when it comes to noise. "I'm bothered by late-night parties and any kind of power equipment early in the

morning. Then there's the neighbor's bug zapper right outside your window and their pool filter that runs continuously."

It's often an emotional issue, said Koim.

"For me, the most annoying sound is when neighbors are arguing with their windows open and it's very, very loud. It's disturbing because you wonder if you should be doing something. Noises that involve safety issues bother me more because I have to make a decision on whether to call the police, like if there's a dog barking in the middle of the night and it's winter."

In "Intrusive Community Noises Yield More Complaints," an article that appeared two years ago in *Hearing Rehabilitation Quarterly*, the authors state that the majority of people affected by noise do not complain. They also cite a community noise survey conducted by the League for the Hard of Hearing that identified

six reported emotional responses to noise: Annoyance, anger, helplessness, and feeling upset, overwhelmed and physically ill. Other respondents reported feeling extremely agitated, overall stressed and tired.

So what can you do when you're assaulted by noise in your neighborhood?

The League for the Hard of Hearing suggests that you approach the noise-maker, providing literature on the impact of noise. Bring along others who share your concerns. If that fails, document the problem and contact the authorities. In most communities that would be an ordinance officer or your local police.

Or, you could organize your own anti-noise group. Hopefully, as a group you'll have more power in resolving a neighborhood noise problem. After all, it's about your home sweet home. It's about your hearing.

Donations from page C6

transplant, he would have grabbed at it: If our registry for liver donors were plentiful, then more people like Scott would have a second chance at life.

One of the things I have learned from this terrible experience is the old saying, "The good die young." How true it was with Scott. He was a kind, loving, hardworking, caring man who would have given you the shirt off his back if it would have helped you. So many people have told me what a good man he was. For me, he was my "soul mate."

Through this whole painful experience, Scott never asked, "Why me?" However, we agreed to be organ donors at the time of our deaths. Scott said, "If I could help someone else from going through this, if I could save one person, it's worth it." The feelings of helplessness, desperation and wanting to do something to help your loved one were overwhelming. I had never felt like

that before in my entire life, and my wish is that - with more organ donations - one day others will not feel like that either.

I am asking everyone reading this article to give serious thought to organ donation. All you have to do is fill out the back of your drivers license and talk it over with your family. It takes a few minutes of your time. And, think of the lifesaving opportunity you are giving to someone. Knowing that your loved one is living on in someone else is a blessing.

My children and I have signed the back of our licenses. There's no greater gift than the "Gift of Life." Please talk with your family about organ and tissue donation.

Reid invites readers interested in organ donation or who have lost a loved one through lack of available organs to contact her at (734) 261-3382.

ONGOING SUPPORT GROUPS

- HEADACHE**
Do you suffer from constant headaches? If so, join the Headache Foundation Support Group the first Wednesday of each month at Providence Northwestern Medical Center-Farmington Hills, 30055 Northwestern, Farmington Hills. Call (248) 268-1973.
- OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS**
Support group for overeaters meets 7 p.m. every Friday at Providence Park-Novi, 47601 Grand River Avenue, Novi. HelpLine: (313) 438-HELP or (248) 474-9456.

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