

## Summer Living and Hearing Loss

By Linda Bilodeau

August 2021

We seem to change how we live with each new season and that is certainly true of summer. Depending on where you call home, you may be spending long lazy days swimming, fishing, hiking, camping or attending outdoor concerts, movies or plays. Your exercise routine may take you out of the gym and onto walking, biking, and hiking trails. However, the outdoor life of the summer months may be challenging for those suffering from hearing loss.

Those wearing hearing aids and implants must always consider moisture. Check with your hearing aid or C.I. manufacturer regarding how your devices hold up in humidity and when wet. Newer aids and implants can withstand some moisture. Some have built-in water resistant casings. Even so, most audiologists still recommend using dry-aid products, particularly at night.

There are several dry-aid devices on the market. They come in all shapes, sizes, and price ranges. Some are portable and made for traveling. Others are designed specifically for rechargeable aids. If you are unsure what products work best with your hearing devices, check with your hearing professional.

Though most aids will tolerate some moisture, with exception, most won't stand up to swimming or a downpour. If you are working out or doing other summertime activities in hot and humid weather, consider purchasing a moisture sleeve for your aids. Remove your hearing aids before taking part in water sports or if you get caught in a downpour. Should you forget, don't panic. Drying your aids thoroughly might return them back to normal operating mode. Before placing your aids in a dry aid device, be sure to remove the battery. Make sure the battery compartment is dry. Run a dry aid cycle over night. After the dry cycle

finishes, check your devices for static, crackling, or fluctuations in sound. If you hear normally, chances are your devices will be okay.

Those with implants should consult their audiologist if the external portions of the C.I. becomes wet. Advance Bionics and Cochlear advertise splash proof and sweat proof processors. Advance Bionics claims that you can swim with their Neptune product. Cochlear states that you can shower with the Nucleus 7. All three CI manufacturers have protective sleeves that can be purchased for moisture protection.

Going to an outdoor movie, concert or play might bring on a hearing dilemma as there will not be a hearing loop. In such cases, you might want to purchase seats as close to the stage as possible. Some hearing aids and implants have a music setting, which might help you hear concerts better. Be careful about sitting too close to speakers. The volume may be too great and thus damage your hearing.

Enjoying the company of others at an outdoor restaurant might be problematic. Background noise is sometimes better at an outdoor venue. However, if you are seated at a crowded sidewalk cafe, you might find the noise level from other diners and the sound of traffic unmanageable. Arrive early for outdoor dining reservations so that you can choose your best hearing table.

Upon arriving at an outdoor picnic or party at a friend's home, use your best judgement as to where to sit and how to handle conversation. Round tables are best in these situations, but if that isn't available, seat yourself in the middle of a long table rather than at one end or another. I always bring along my mighty mini mic to use as a last resort.

If the summer months find you traveling, pack an extra pair of hearing aids and make sure you have all the peripherals and electrical cords that you need. Ask your audiologist where you might find hearing help at your destination. Some hearing aids and Implant problems can be dealt with remotely. Your audiologist can set up the needed apps for you to use prior to your departure. Also consider if

there are still Covid restrictions at your destination and whether or not you will need a mask. We all know how difficult it is to hear when others are wearing masks. Again, I find my mini mic a great help in these situations.

Enjoy summer living. Be prepared and plan ahead. Seek the guidance of your hearing professional before you leave town. If you have a hearing mishap, you don't want to spend the rest of a fun day or your vacation struggling to hear. Giving a little thought and doing some planning before you undertake summer activities will lead to carefree and fun meanderings through the hearing world.