

HEALTH SERVICES PROTECTION PLAN

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Good Hearing, Essential to Physical and Emotional Well-Being

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For many years, it was clear that my father was becoming hard of hearing. Normally gregarious and the life of the party, he became increasingly withdrawn because he couldn't hear well enough to partake in the conversations around the table. He was declining in front of my eyes. And yet, when we communicated by email, his intellectual curiosity and warm storytelling skills were intact. But in person, he seemed to be fading away.

After considerable prodding, I convinced him to get a pair of custom hearing aids. The transformation was amazing. At a family reunion a month later, there was my father sitting at the breakfast table, regaling everybody with stories of his mischievous childhood. He was, once again, the center of attention. Gone was the shuffling walk, replaced by a strong confident stride. From the withdrawn, quiet man who would sit by himself emerged my funny, animated father who told stories, laughed, and played jokes. The dad I remembered as a child came back to us.

This story, and so many just like it, are about changing the public conversation on hearing to show how people who experience hearing loss can move from fear to denial to aging gracefully, with resilience, joy, and health.

The Health Benefits of Hearing Well

We should be talking about what I saw: the profound impact that hearing well can have on the living. We should be talking about what is gained by hearing well-social interaction, family connection, and workplace productivity-not about what is lost.

Surprisingly, many of us wait seven to ten years before even acknowledging we are having trouble hearing and look into getting hearing aids. Why? For some of us it's denial, or fear of looking old: for others the hearing loss is so gradual we might not be aware of the insidious progression of it.

Yet, failing to get hearing tested and corrected early may actually contribute to aging faster. Hearing loss is associated with earlier onset of dementia, earlier mortality, and six times the rate of falls compared to those with normal hearing. Contributing to these negative health consequences is the isolation, the loss of interactive communication with others due to inability to hear clearly. This results in loneliness, which is known to have a negative health impact equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Moreover, when the input is diminished, the brain loses the ability to distinguish sounds, which means having to "re-learn" to hear when she or he finally gets hearing aids.

Having a Conversation about Hearing Loss

Instead of hearing loss, think about what you gain when you hear, allowing you to live a life to the fullest.

My dad's transformation was an "aha" moment for me-as a daughter and doctor. I've since learned that hearing loss, which can be alleviated fairly easily, is a largely hidden problem, even as it affects many. One in three people 60-plus and two thirds of people 70-plus have a hearing loss. Among baby boomers, 15% of school-age children have some degree of hearing loss, with the highest incidence among teens.

These numbers are hardly surprising given our routine exposure to rock concerts, sports stadiums, car stereos, ear buds, traffic jams, jet engines, and the like. Hearing loss is no longer a marker of age. It's here, now and it's something many of us will experience sooner than we expect. As a result, we can't stress enough the importance of protecting our hearing and preventing hearing loss from the loud noises in our environment-and getting one's hearing tested early.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/good-hearing-essential-to-physical-and-emotional-well-being-2016102010480> (Last Accessed 2/6/2019)

Consultant of the Month Kyle Merrill



Kyle Merrill proudly serves the Hermiston, Pendleton area with their hearing aid needs. What attracted Kyle to Miracle-Ear was the opportunity to deliver a better quality of life through better hearing. "Bringing families together and seeing relationships rebuilt through the gift of sound is by far the most rewarding experience I can ask for in a career. When I walk into the door of my office my heart swells with joy. I get to connect with patients and take in the beautiful stories how Miracle-Ear has impacted their lives." Kyle credits his success to the love and support of his family.

PCC of the Month Claire Wilson



Claire Wilson is fairly new to the Miracle-Ear family in the Hermiston area. She was transferring colleges, which led to her to a career change with us. "I am thankful to have been so lucky to find this job. I know it sounds cheesy, but my favorite part of the job is being able to help people. Also, the fact that we get to know our patients so well that they treat us like family warms my heart every time they walk in or call." Helping people has always been a passion for Claire. "Seeing the transformation in people through better hearing is life changing and I am thankful to be a part of it."

Shepherd's Pie



Ingredients:

For the potatoes:

- 1 1/2 pounds russet potatoes
- 1/4 cup half-and-half
- 2 ounces unsalted butter
- 3/4 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 egg yolk

For the meat filling:

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced small
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-2 pounds of beef
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons of tomato paste
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons freshly chopped rosemary leaves
- 1 teaspoon freshly chopped thyme leaves
- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen peas

Riddle of the Month

You have three stoves: a gas stove, a wood stove, and a coal stove, but only one match. Which should you light first?

Answer: _____

STAY TUNED! Answer will be in our April's Newsletter

Answer to February's Riddle: February

Prep Time: 45 mins

Cook Time: 45

Total Time: 1 hr 30 mins

Directions:

1. Peel the potatoes and cut into 1/2-inch dice. Place in a medium saucepan and cover with cold water. Set over high heat, cover and bring to a boil. Once boiling, uncover, decrease the heat to maintain a simmer and cook until tender and easily crushed with tongs, approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Place the half-and-half and butter into a microwave-safe container and heat in the microwave until warmed through, about 35 seconds. Drain the potatoes in a colander and then return to the saucepan. Mash the potatoes and then add the half and half, butter, salt and pepper and continue to mash until smooth. Stir in the yolk until well combined.
2. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
3. While the potatoes are cooking, prepare the filling. Place the canola oil into a 12-inch sauté pan and set over medium high heat. Once the oil shimmers, add the onion and carrots and sauté just until they begin to take on color, approximately 3 to 4 minutes. Add the garlic and stir to combine. Add the beef, salt and pepper and cook until browned and cooked through, approximately 3 minutes. Sprinkle the meat with the flour and toss to coat, continuing to cook for another minute. Add the tomato paste, chicken broth, Worcestershire, rosemary, thyme, and stir to combine. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer slowly 10 to 12 minutes or until the sauce is thickened slightly.
4. Add the corn and peas to the beef mixture and spread evenly into an 11 by 7-inch glass baking dish. Top with the mashed potatoes, starting around the edges to create a seal to prevent the mixture from bubbling up and smooth with a rubber spatula. Place on a parchment lined half sheet pan on the middle rack of the oven and bake for 25 minutes or just until the potatoes begin to brown. Remove to a cooling rack for at least 15 minutes before serving.

<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/alton-brown/shepherds-pie-recipe2-1942900>
(Last accessed 2/6/2019)

Protection Plan Testimonial

"I was very upset I lost my hearing aids. It was a blessing to get them replaced at no cost. I encourage others to get the Protection Plan. Leona and Adele in Shelton took care of everything for me!"

Roger Hoff— *Shelton*