



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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DEAF AWARENESS WEEK 24-30 AUGUST

The KwaZulu- Natal Department of Health is observing Deaf Awareness Week (DAW) from the 24 to 30 August 2005. DAW is a week dedicated to educating the public about hearing loss, Deafness, Deaf Culture and Sign Language. The aim is to ensure that hearing people understand Deafness and the culture of the Deaf Community.

A person who is unable to hear some sounds is said to present with HEARING LOSS. A person who is able to hear some sounds is said to be HARD OF HEARING. A person who is unable to hear any sounds is said to be DEAF.

The ear is made up of 3 parts i.e. outer, middle and inner ear. Hearing loss can result from an obstruction or damage in any of these 3 parts.

There are 3 main types of hearing loss:

- ▪ CONDUCTIVE HEARING LOSS – occurs when there is an obstruction in the transmission of sound to the inner ear. The problem lies in the outer or middle ear.
- ▪ SENSORINEURAL HEARING LOSS - is caused by the inappropriate functioning of the cochlea or the hearing nerve.
- ▪ MIXED HEARING LOSS – is a combination of the above.

Excessive accumulation of ear wax or infection of the auditory canal in the outer ear can cause hearing loss. Perforation of the eardrum, infection or fluid in the middle ear and otosclerosis can lead to difficulties in hearing. The natural aging process, excessive exposure to noise, medication that is toxic to the auditory system and head injuries can also cause hearing loss.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEARING LOSS

- ▪ Discharging ears
- ▪ Earaches/pain in area of head/ear
- ▪ Ringing, buzzing and roaring sounds in the ear
- ▪ Swelling around ear
- ▪ Dizziness
- ▪ "Blocked sensation" in the ear



- ▪ Frequent requests for repetitions
- ▪ Sits near the television or has the volume loud
- ▪ A babies babbling ceases around 6-8 months of age or the babbling is replaced by screaming.
- ▪ Insufficient language development as the child grows and difficulty in following instructions.

PREVENTION OF HEARING DIFFICULTIES

- Attend to earaches, discharge and discomfort in the ear immediately
 - Do not insert any objects into the ear canal
 - Do not instill ear drops not prescribed for yourself into your ears
 - Do not expose your ears to excessively loud music for extended periods of time
 - Be aware of the causes of hearing difficulties and its applicability to yourself
- Screen your hearing ability regularly.

A hearing test is carried out using advanced equipment that allows the Audiologist to identify the site, severity and possible cause of the hearing loss in patients from newborns to geriatrics. Management can either be medical; i.e. referral to E.N.T. or rehabilitative, i.e. hearing aids, sign language training, etc. Hearing people tend to have a number of myths and misconceptions about Deaf people. DAW aims to discredit these misconceptions by educating the public and making them aware of the true nature of Deafness.

Always remain positive and relaxed when communicating with the Deaf. Show that you care – your attitude can build confidence.

DEAF AWARENESS WEEK ACTIVITIES

Ugu District Hospitals will be conducting awareness activities at the different sites.

Eshowe Hospital will be doing hearing screen

King Edward VIII Hospital's Audiology department has already presented a feature on Y FM radio station pertaining to Deaf Awareness week.

The Rehabilitation Programmes – Ethekewini District office will be presenting information on Deafness and Deaf Culture on Ukhozi FM.

The Phoenix Assessment & Therapy Centre will be hosting an information sharing morning on the 9 September 2005 discussing issues related to hearing loss, Deafness, Sign Language and hearing aids.

ENDS

For more information please contact Ms Nasim Khan (Speech and And Audiology Programme) Disability on 0845486350 or Lindiwe Khuzwayo on 083 393 9943.