

## HEARING HEALTH CARE IN THE WORKPLACE

In 1969, legendary Washington Redskins Coach Vince Lombardi noticed that running back Larry Brown was responding late to the quarterback's snap. Taking a guess, he had Brown's hearing tested and found he was impaired in one ear. Lombardi had Brown's helmet fitted with an earpiece that relayed the quarterback's calls.

Three years later, Brown was the NFL's Most Valuable Player and led his team to the Super Bowl.

Today, managers and human resource executives could take a page from Lombardi's playbook. If an employee is suddenly missing information or zoning out in meetings, he or she could be having trouble hearing. That's not a surprising situation in the modern workplace where older workers – including senior-level leaders – are staying longer, and baby boomers are coming out of retirement.

We know that anywhere from 20 to 30 percent of baby boomers are suffering from some degree of untreated hearing loss. That can affect job performance, productivity and earnings.

In fact, one study found that **people with hearing loss may lose as much as \$30,000 in annual income.** Another study reports that 95 percent of employees with untreated hearing loss admitted that it affects their job in at least one way, whether it's asking people to repeat themselves, misunderstanding what they hear or pretending to understand when they don't.

Untreated hearing loss can also pose a safety concern, preventing individuals from hearing sounds that signal hazards in the work environment. It can be especially dangerous for those who work in construction, manufacturing and law enforcement.

**The person with a hearing problem is often the last to notice it,** because the change comes on gradually and starts subtly, without discomfort or pain. What's more, family members and colleagues often learn to adapt and compensate for someone's hearing loss without even realizing they are doing it.

As a company, **one of the best things you can do is create a corporate climate where hearing loss is acknowledged,** so those with hidden hearing loss feel more comfortable. **Start by teaching your employees to recognize the signs of hearing loss** in themselves and others:

1. Do they often ask people to repeat themselves?
2. Do they have trouble following conversations with more than two people?
3. Do they have difficulty hearing what is said unless facing the speaker?
4. Do they struggle to hear in crowded places like restaurants or meeting rooms?
5. Do they have a hard time hearing women or children?
6. Do they prefer the TV or radio volume louder than others?
7. Do they experience ringing or buzzing in their ears?
8. Do they say other people are mumbling or slurring their words?

If the answer to several of these questions is yes, chances are they suffer from hearing loss. **If you suspect a hearing loss, send your employee to Comprehensive Ear & Hearing.** We'll be happy to test their hearing and make a recommendation for appropriate solutions if necessary.

The good news is that **hearing loss is easily treatable.** Hearing aids, as well as other appropriate treatments and workplace accommodations, can help individuals be at their best.

Here are some other steps you can take to make those with treated or untreated hearing loss more productive:

- Avoid choosing noisy restaurants for meeting locations.
- Summarize meeting minutes in writing to be sure that those with hearing issues are clear on outcomes and expectations.
- Provide easy accommodations, such as moving an employee's desk away from noisy hallways, machines or air vents; or installing a phone that amplifies high frequencies.
- Build work environments that facilitate better hearing by choosing cubicles with noise-absorbent materials and meeting rooms with an inductive loop that creates a wireless zone for hearing aids with telecoils, headsets or microphones.

By encouraging employees to treat hearing loss rather than hide it, employers create a win-win situation for them and their employee. They ensure that the loss of hearing does not interfere with job performance, productivity or safety, as well as the employee's career and quality of life – on the job or off.

### Employees and Family Members Receive

- FREE hearing screens
- FREE hearing instrument demonstrations and trial use
- \$500 OFF a pair of digital hearing instruments
- FREE clean & checks on current hearing instruments
- 20% OFF hearing instrument accessories or assistive listening devices.
- 20% OFF custom hearing protection (music, shooters, occupational, swim plugs)
- 0% financing options available

*Discounts cannot be combined with other offers.*

Comprehensive  
**EAR & HEARING**  
 Zeeland • Holland • Grand Haven



Zeeland (616) 772-1986  
 Holland (616) 393-5482  
 Grand Haven (616) 847-3144

Comprehensive Services with a Caring Touch!

**Hearing Benefits Card**

The Comprehensive Ear & Hearing Benefits Plan is available to all businesses in Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties. If you'd like more information on the Comprehensive Ear & Hearing Business Benefits Program or to receive benefits cards for your employees, call Deb Broemer at 616.847.3144.

## Health & Wellness Initiatives

Employers can show support for their employees' overall health and wellness by providing access to hearing health benefits and education on the importance of regular hearing check-ups and prompt treatment if hearing loss is detected.

Since many medical plans do not cover hearing health care, consider offering the **Comprehensive Ear & Hearing Benefits Plan** as an ancillary benefit. Our plan is at no cost to your business or your employees. It offers access to our staff of hearing professionals, FREE hearing screens, substantial savings on hearing aids and custom hearing protection, guaranteed trial periods for hearing aids and more. Hearing aids also are eligible

expenses for health savings accounts (HSAs) and flexible savings accounts (FSAs).

Employers also can integrate education on the importance of hearing care into existing efforts, such as wellness newsletters and health fairs. Content for education is available free of charge from Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. Our professionals also are available to visit worksites to provide educational presentations and offer complimentary hearing screens.

These small steps will not only prevent hearing loss from having a negative affect on work productivity, they will also help employees maintain their health and achieve a better quality of life.

Call Deb Broemer at **(616) 847-3144** to request information or benefits cards for your employees!

## Comprehensive EAR & HEARING

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  - Free hearing instrument trials • Free consultations
- Repairs and maintenance on all makes of hearing instruments
  - Medical ear & hearing care and wax removal by ENT
- Most insurance accepted • Medical flexible spending account eligible

### Office Hours

Monday - Friday 8:30 am - 5:00 pm  
After hours appointments available by request.

*Professional Services with a Caring Touch!*