

## pediatric pointers



Let them experience firsthand the benefits of advanced hearing aid technology.

# Make the Connection

**T**here's no getting around it, the teen years can be awkward, challenging, rewarding, perplexing, stressful, explosive, creative, blossoming, and certainly unpredictable. It's important for teens to be cool like everyone else, and they don't want to miss out on anything. That can be a tough balancing act with hearing loss and hearing aids.

Just as you may have assisted their parents by providing information, resources, and amplification choices, the teen patient also needs your expertise.

The communication environments of teens are probably more dynamic and challenging than most active adult clients. Consider these everyday occurrences: banter among friends while jockeying through crowded hallways; secrets shared in whispers; classmates' discussion from all corners of the classroom; directions from coaches and teammates on the playing field; assemblies in echo-filled gymnasiums and auditoriums; assignments rattled off by the teacher just as the bell rings; lunchtime in the cafeteria. Then there are part-time jobs, the dating scene (hearing aids *cannot* whistle while "making out"), and hanging out with friends and, yes, even family.

It's critical, then, that the teen's hearing instruments are up to the task. The COSI is still a valuable tool to help uncover the teen's communication and technology needs—which may be as elusive to you as their fashion sense. Automatic directionality, noise reduction strategies, and multiple programs may be beneficial to optimize their speech understanding. In just the past few years the hearing aid industry has developed some groundbreaking technology to better address the needs of active and demanding users. More cosmetic solutions are now available, too, using thin tubes for BTEs and receiver-in-the-ear devices. Take a look at that handful of teen clients you have and invite them in to discuss if their current hearing aids are truly meeting their diverse needs.

### Connect them to electronics

You don't need to be a technology geek to appreciate the huge explosion of personal communication devices that many of us take for granted. How many teens and young adults *don't* have a multifunctional cell phone and an iPod® or MP3 player? What are the connection issues facing your teen and active adult clients? How can they use Bluetooth® phones with their hearing aids? There are several options now, using both dedicated and free-standing devices, to enable Bluetooth compatibility with hearing instruments. Be sure you're knowledgeable and comfortable discussing cell phone compatibility issues with your hearing aid clients—there are many resources for you to review (Linda Kozma-Spytek from Gallaudet has an excellent recorded course on Audiology Online; also read "On the Go," page 27, *ADVANCE for Audiologists*, Jan./Feb. 2006).

Don't forget to demonstrate the ease and integrity of direct audio input—everyone is wearing a cord to their ears today! For ITE (and BTE) users, there are a variety of neckloop applications as well. Consider holding a technology demo for your patients in conjunction with your local electronics store for an innovative presentation in a fun venue.

### Connect them to each other

I recently attended an excellent workshop on teen socialization issues sponsored by the New York AG Bell chapter. A repeated comment from anxious parents in the room was, "My child is the only one in his school with a hearing loss." You can facilitate this important peer connection by letting your teen clients and their families know about the new forum on the Facebook Web site, recently introduced by the HearingExchange at [www.hearingexchange.com](http://www.hearingexchange.com). "HearingExchange Teens" is a forum for deaf and hard-of-hearing teenagers in high school and college and their friends to share their opinions, ask questions, and network with one another about issues related to hearing loss. You can add to their networking opportunities by connecting successful working adults with hearing loss to teens and their parents.

By helping your teen clients better connect to technology and each other, you can empower them to be more successful on their journey through high school and college. **\$**

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