

Your Hearing Care Is Health Care

NEWSLETTER



A Health Care Publication from Dr. Keith N. Darrow, Ph.D., CCC-A

April 2025



ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

Is there a connection between alcohol and hearing loss?

Alcohol Awareness Month was organized by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. It has become a national movement to help draw attention to the causes and effects of alcoholism. We honor this month with the hopes that, as audiologists, we can also bring awareness to the correlation between alcohol and hearing loss.

How does alcohol affect your hearing?

Do you like to have a few beers or a glass of wine every now and then? Fear not, we aren't here to lecture you. In fact, moderate or social drinking typically won't affect your hearing at all. But there are some takeaways to consider relative to what level of consumption is safe.

So, does drinking alcohol cause hearing loss?

That's a complex question, but we do now know that it does have effects on the brain and can impact hearing. A person who drinks alcohol regularly for long periods can expect that the part of the brain which processes auditory signals (central auditory cortex) will more than likely be effected. Research has shown that heavy drinking does, in fact, correlate with poor hearing. For more information, visit <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15084909/>.

The effects of alcohol on the auditory cortex.

The central auditory cortex is responsible for interpreting sound signals. Once our outer ear collects these

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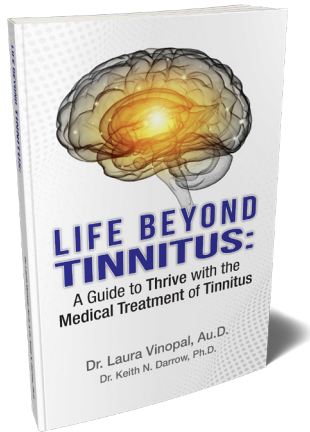


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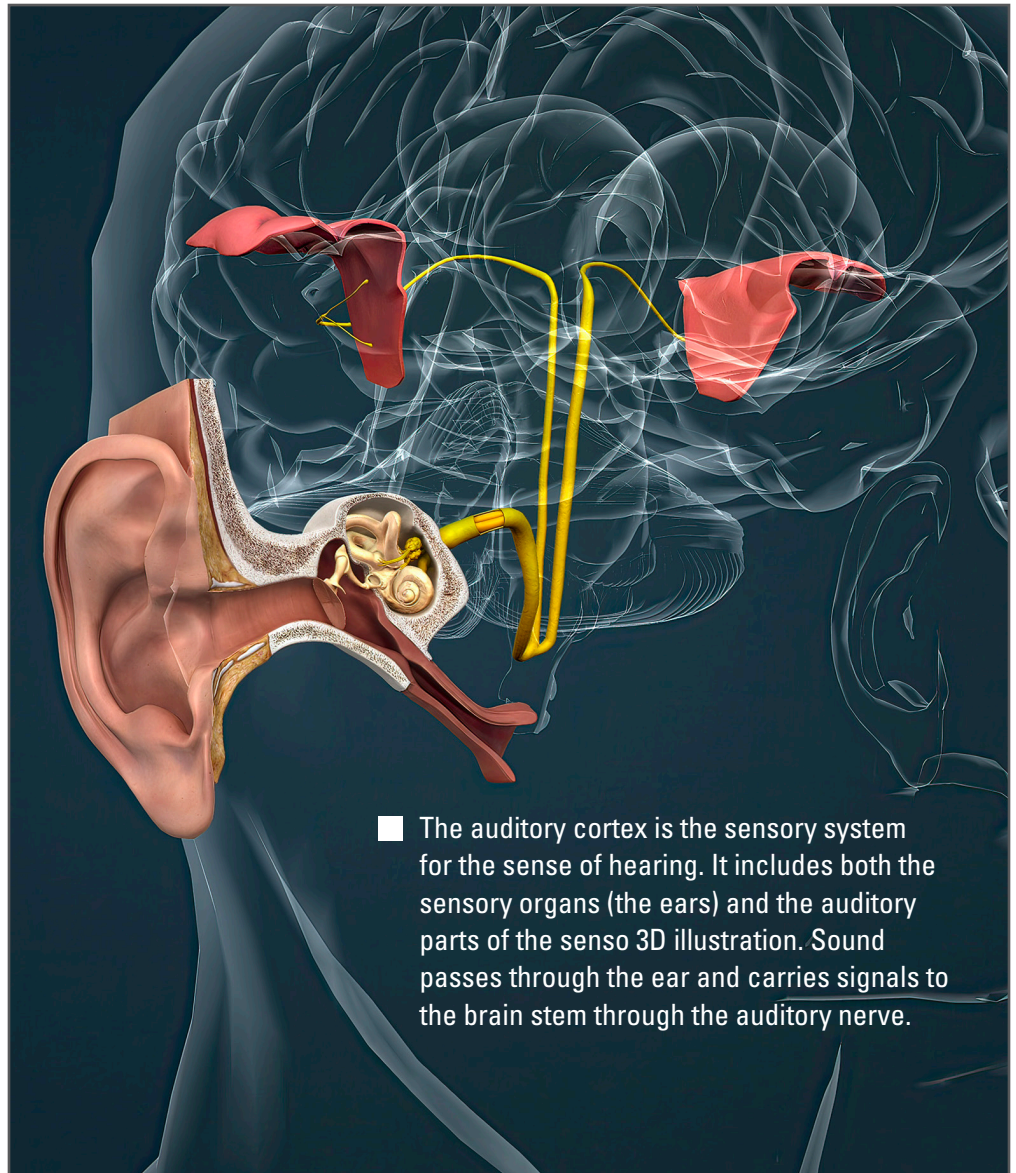
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Dr. Keith Darrow, PhD, CCC-A
M.I.T. and Harvard Medical Trained
Neuroscientist and Clinical Audiologist

Dr. Darrow is a Harvard Medical School and M.I.T. trained neuroscientist and clinical audiologist. He is a professor at Worcester State University and Certified Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Trainer. His book, *Preventing Decline*, is an Amazon.com #1 New Release and Best Seller.

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■ The auditory cortex is the sensory system for the sense of hearing. It includes both the sensory organs (the ears) and the auditory parts of the senso 3D illustration. Sound passes through the ear and carries signals to the brain stem through the auditory nerve.

sound signals, they are transmitted to the brain in the form of stimuli or electrical signals. The auditory cortex interprets the signals to help us understand.

So, what are the signs of auditory cortex damage?

The brain will start processing at a much slower speed. For example, while talking to a person who talks fast, you may miss out on a few words. Your ears can hear the person, but the brain will not process all words, thus making you miss out on a few words from each sentence.

Alcohol does, however, affect your ears also. Your ears contain very fine

hairs that generate nervous stimuli when they vibrate and send electrical signals to your brain. Research has shown that drinking too much alcohol can have a profound effect on these crucial fine hairs. This is where a drinker's hearing can be damaged. It seems that the alcohol creates a toxic environment, thereby weakening the hairs and making them fail. And while hair grows back on many parts of the body, this is not the case with the ears. Rather, your hearing will simply degrade gradually.

Cocktail Deafness

Have you ever noticed that after a few drinks at a bar, it actually becomes

a bit harder to pick up fully on conversations? This is called temporary alcohol-induced deafness, cocktail deafness, or the cocktail party effect. While this is generally temporary, with regular intake of alcohol, it can become permanent.

Can alcohol cause tinnitus?

The link between tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and alcohol has been well established as the blood vessels around the ears expand. When this happens, more blood will flow to the ears causing that fuzziness we call “a buzz”. Research-

ers has found that the response from those who drink frequently is that tinnitus is often present. If this is you, please visit www.excellenceinaudiology.com or schedule a consultation with a hearing specialist today.

The bottom line: it is vital that you keep your drinking to social events and moderate consumption while at home. Studies have also shown that a glass of red wine a day can be helpful to hearing, so we're not telling you to quit altogether. Just be vigilant and be sure to deal with any problems which may arise.

*If you feel you or someone you love might be struggling with alcoholism, call the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence at 1-866-480-7044 to take the first step toward recovery, a healthier life and better hearing.

Brain Healthy Recipe

Sweet and Sour Indian Chicken



Ingredients

- 3 pounds chicken thighs, skinless, bone-in
- 1/3 cup flour
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 medium onions, sliced thinly
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh ginger root, chopped
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons turmeric
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 3/4 cups chicken broth

Directions

1. Heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium high heat.
2. Dredge chicken pieces in flour to coat and brown chicken on both sides. Remove from pan and set aside.
3. In the same pan, add remaining tablespoon of oil, onions, and garlic and cook until soft and golden brown. Add sugar and spices. Cook and stir for about a minute, then add vinegar and broth.
4. Add chicken, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes. Taste sauce and add salt if necessary. Serve chicken and sauce over a bed of basmati rice with a simple green salad on the side.

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PUPILLARY LIGHT REFLEX

The pupillary light reflex results when light is shined into either eye causing both pupils to constrict. Doctors use this reflex to determine if the reflex pathway through the midbrain has in any way been disrupted. If the reflex fails to produce a response in one or both eyes, the doctor can deduce the location of the malfunction based on which of the eyes failed to respond and which eye was stimulated.



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Brain Game Cryptogram > Instructions: Try to decode the message.

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