

Foods for Better Hearing

While there is no known cure for sensory or sensorineural hearing loss, there are steps which we can all take which may help to slow the progression of hearing loss. Of course we should all protect our hearing when exposed to loud noise, but we may also want to consider what we eat. The following information may be useful in thinking about your hearing and your diet.

Potassium



Helps to regulate the amount of fluid in your blood and body tissue. The inner ear is dependent upon a rich supply of potassium, especially in that part of the ear that translates the noises we hear into electrical impulses the brain interprets as sound.

Potassium-rich foods include: potatoes, spinach, lima beans, tomatoes, raisins, apricots, bananas, melons, oranges, yogurt, and low-fat milk. With springtime picnics marking the calendar, think about bringing your favorite low-fat buttermilk potato salad recipe or a fruit salad with citrus and melons for tasty and potassium-rich side dishes.

Magnesium



Research conducted at the University of Michigan Kresge Hearing Research Institute has shown that people pretreated with magnesium (along with Vitamins A, C, and E) were protected from noise-related hearing loss.

Foods rich in magnesium include fruits and vegetables, such as bananas, artichokes, potatoes, spinach, tomatoes and broccoli. Artichokes start to come in season during the springtime. The best way to serve artichokes is to boil them for 20 - 30 minutes and serve them with warm butter or a cool dill yogurt dip Bonus - the yogurt dip will provide potassium too!

Folic Acid



Helps generate new cell growth and reduce inflammation. Good circulation is an important component in keeping the hair cells of the inner ear healthy and working properly.

Foods include fortified breakfast cereal, liver, spinach, broccoli and asparagus. Breakfast is most important meal of the day. Skipping breakfast can lead to overeating later in the day, especially of foods that are poor in nutrients and high in calories. Consider starting your day with fortified breakfast cereals that are also whole grain and low in sugar.

Zinc



Zinc boosts body's immune system and is also responsible for cell growth and healing wounds, so it's potentially helpful in warding off germs that cause common cold and, ultimately, those pesky ear infections. Zinc does interact with antibiotics and diuretics, though, so be sure to seek a physician's advice before adding this mineral to your diet.

Foods rich in zinc include beef, port and dark-meat chicken, cashews, almonds, peanuts, beans, split peas, lentils, oysters - and dark chocolate! Think about trying your hand at making homemade granola bars to get your fill of zinc. Nuts and dark chocolate work great as key ingredients, along with oats, popped quinoa, raisins, dried cranberries and coconut flakes. Consider using honey, cacao butter and nut butters as binders. Search the Internet to find recipes from home cooks around the world for variations on homemade granola bars, then tweak a good recipe to your delight!

Summary

With a balanced diet that includes the vitamins from whole foods, our bodies usually produce enough of these minerals to keep us healthy and functioning effectively.

Check with your physician before adding any supplements to your diet.

As always, if you think you may have hearing loss, seek out a local hearing healthcare professional for a full hearing evaluation.