



Summer Fun SEEK & FIND

Find the summer-themed icons below hidden throughout this newsletter. If you get stumped and need help, the answers can be found on our website by scanning the QR code below.

Good luck and have fun! Happy summer!



Check your answers by scanning the QR code or by visiting www.hearsantafe.com/puzzle-answers/.



David Brown, M.D. OFFERS TIPS for Managing Balance Issues DURING Summer Activities

Hiking, tennis, water sports—summer is the season to stay active outside! But if you or someone you love has a vestibular disorder, participating fully in all the summer fun may be a little more challenging.

What is a Vestibular Disorder?

A vestibular disorder is a condition that affects the vestibular system, which is part of the inner ear and brain. This system helps control balance, spatial orientation and coordination.

When the vestibular system is not functioning correctly, it can lead to a variety of unpleasant symptoms and issues, including vertigo, dizziness, balance problems and an unsteady gait.

How to Manage a Balance Issue During Summer Activities

Savoring summer is so much easier when you follow these simple guidelines:

- Take vitamin D, which is known to help the vestibular system stay healthy.
- Wear sunglasses and a hat outdoors to avoid bright light, which can trigger balance problems.
- Use the buddy system by doing your favorite activities with a friend for extra security and safety.
- Bring a walking aid to use when you're on uneven ground or feeling unsteady.
- Have a cell phone handy in case of emergency.
- Use earplugs in noisy places, as loud noises may worsen vertigo, dizziness and balance issues.

The best way to manage any balance issue you may face? Get the right medical treatment for it as soon as possible.

If you're struggling to find balance in your life, don't wait. TALK TO YOUR ENT doctor or primary care physician to discuss next steps, today!



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Summer Is Sweeter WITH BETTER HEARING!



ENJOY THE SOUNDS of birds chirping, dinner on the barbeque sizzling and children splashing in the pool! If you're missing out on any of these sounds, we're here to help! Call to schedule an appointment, and we'll have you back to enjoying the summer season to the fullest!

(505) 946-3955

Melanie Gallegos
Clinical Operations Manager

DR. PETERSON and her family welcomed a beautiful baby girl, **Bethany Elsie Grace Peterson!**

Born on May 2, 2024

The Southwestern Hearing & Balance team expresses their sincere congratulations to the Peterson family and looks forward to Dr. Peterson's return to the clinic in August.



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Dr. Miller EXPLAINS WHY Your Ears Perk Up Around Interesting Sounds

BANG! You slam the front door shut, and your dog's ears move toward the unexpected sound. But did you know your ears may be unconsciously doing the same thing, just much more subtly?

These involuntary, nearly imperceptible ear muscle movements are controlled by your vestigial auriculomotor system. Experts believe that the vestigial auriculomotor system is likely a "neural fossil" that's been part of the human brain for 25 million years!

In short, although you can't move your ears in the direction of interesting sounds on your own, your vestigial auriculomotor system tries to—and often does!

What Research Shows

In a 2020 study, the participants read a boring text while surprising sounds, such as footsteps, a traffic jam or a crying baby, played. They then listened to a podcast while a second podcast was playing in another direction. Researchers recorded the electrical activity in the ear muscles and used video recording to track any ear movements during both experiments.

After reviewing the data, they determined that "tiny involuntary movements in muscles surrounding the ear closest to the direction of a sound the person is listening to" occurred. Additionally, when participants were trying to hear one podcast and ignore the other, their ears made small movements in the direction of the podcast they preferred!

These results show that human ears do "perk up" when encountering an interesting sound, physically shifting toward what they want to focus on.

The most exciting part? The study's findings could be used to develop more advanced hearing aids, which could "sense the electrical activity in the ear muscles and amplify sounds the person is trying to focus on, while minimizing other sounds."

Although today's hearing aids are not this advanced yet, they do offer other incredible features. If you're ready to increase your hearing power with the latest life-changing technology, schedule an appointment with a member of our team today! (505) 946-3955

1. Steuss, D et al. (2020). Vestigial auriculomotor activity indicates the direction of auditory attention in humans. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7334025/>