



## A Blog on Indigestible Restaurant Noise



By Del Meyer, MD, *hearing score: 80 percent; discrimination score: 40 percent*

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 90 PERCENT of people with vision loss generally obtain glasses to correct their loss, while only 25 percent of people with hearing loss obtain hearing aids. Hearing aids are very good at amplifying the sound to bring *volume* back to normal.

However, all hearing loss is not conductive. Much of it is *perceptive* - where the hearing impaired person is unable to distinguish between many words.

An audiogram describes the decibel hearing loss with the familiar curve. However, the perception or discrimination score is far more important. In this part of an audiogram the audiologist turns up background noise and asks that words be repeated back.

Discrimination scores are commonly in the 80s and 90s which means that you are able to correctly identify 8 or 9 of words out of 10. People with hearing impairment often don't hear the first word or two and work backwards to guess from content the first word of a sentence. Therefore it is important when talking to a person with hearing aids to speak in sentences: To say "yes" or "no" is seldom understood, so say, "Yes, you can" or "No, you can't" for better understanding by the person with hearing loss.

If a discrimination score drops to 40 percent, that means you hear 4 words out of 10 and you no longer can reconstruct a sentence. People with hearing aids watch your lips very carefully since lip reading helps understanding. So try to never talk to a person wearing hearing aids from the back or side. Speak directly from in front.

People with perceptive hearing problems and poor discrimination scores have huge problems when dining in a noisy environment, as is found in many restaurants. Background noise makes communicating across the table almost impossible, and the hearing impaired generally fail to communicate. In a noisy restaurant you may notice the hearing impaired, silently nodding as if they could hear, yet isolated, often attempting to hide behind a fake bright fixed smile.

Our blog is dedicated to noise-rating restaurants. We hope this blog will provide a list of hearing-friendly venues. After all, with luck many who now hear well will live long enough to become impaired. We would like your help. When you dine we ask that you rate the restaurant relative to background or ambient noise on a scale from one to ten - One being an intolerable din making it impossible to hold decent conversations, and Ten being a quiet dining environment where conversation is easily carried out among several people.

In addition to the one to ten rating, please provide the name and address of the restaurant, the day of the week and time you were there, and a comment: If you made a reservation and asked for a quiet table, was it quiet? How were the service and the food? Are you aware of certain days when the ambient noise is different, as, for example, when there is entertainment?

We are particularly interested in the Sacramento, Yolo and El Dorado Counties area, but if you find a particularly noise friendly place elsewhere in California it will be appreciated. Results will be collected and displayed at our blogsite <http://medicaltuesday.blogs.com>.

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