



SERTOMA SPEECH & HEARING CENTERS

HEARING LOSS Your Guide to the Facts

CAUSES OF HEARING LOSS

Natural loss of hearing with aging

Called presbycusis, this type of loss is sensorineural. Two-thirds of Americans over 70 have it but many more who are younger also experience presbycusis.

Persistent loud environments

Sporting events, rock concerts, gas-powered lawnmowers, and high-noise work environments can damage hair cells, a key element of hearing. Hair cells do not regenerate, so damaging them creates permanent hearing loss.

Heredity

Hereditary hearing loss accounts for 50% to 60% of hearing loss in babies. Genes and the environment can also interact in ways that cause hearing loss.

Disease

Two diseases that cause a loss of hearing are otosclerosis (affects the middle ear) and Ménière's disease, which affects the inner ear with the damage becoming permanent eventually.

Ototoxic drugs

Some drugs can damage hearing. For

example, ototoxic drugs (e.g., streptomycin and neomycin) and some chemotherapy drugs can damage hearing significantly.

Diabetes

The association of diabetes with hearing loss is substantial. Hearing loss is about twice as common in adults with diabetes compared to nondiabetics. Diabetes may lead to hearing loss by damaging the nerves and blood vessels of the inner ear.

Radiation for head-and-neck cancer

This type of cancer, the sixth most common worldwide, can cause hearing loss. Treating hearing loss in these patients helps fend off depression.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI)

As you can imagine, this is a significant challenge for veterans and athletes in various sports.

CONSEQUENCES OF HEARING LOSS

The struggle to communicate

Losing hearing means a lot more emotional and cognitive effort to communicate with family, friends, and new acquaintances. It is trying for

everyone.

A professional challenge

Occupational hearing loss arises from loud workplaces. Hearing loss from work is especially damaging because it affects income and personal safety.

Self-perception

The changes go beyond the struggle to hear. People who have lost hearing lose some of their confidence and often feel much older. Untreated hearing loss is a significant stress that can lead to social isolation and depression.

Safety

Our safety is affected too. For example, as pedestrians, a loss of hearing jeopardizes our ability to negotiate busy, crowded spaces. Because the auditory information that warns us of hazards is missing. Driving with hearing loss is more difficult too: We are more isolated, less able to identify road and vehicle noise, and passenger voices.

Next, on side two, the signs and symptoms of hearing loss and the 11 questions you need to ask.

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For directions and office hours:

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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEARING LOSS

Ask yourself the following 11 questions. Circle your responses Yes or No.

1. Do I have a problem hearing on the telephone? Yes No
2. Do I have trouble hearing when there is noise in the background? Yes No
3. Is it hard for me to follow a conversation when two or more people talk at once? Yes No
4. Do I have to strain to understand a conversation? Yes No
5. Do many people I talk to seem to mumble (or not speak clearly)? Yes No
6. Do I misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately? Yes No
7. Do I often ask people to repeat themselves? Yes No
8. Do I have trouble understanding the speech of women and children? Yes No
9. Do people complain that I turn the TV volume up too high? Yes No
10. Do I hear a ringing, roaring, or hissing sound a lot? Yes No
11. Do some sounds seem too loud? Yes No

If you have three or more Yes responses, schedule a free, 15-minute hearing screening with one of our audiologists. Source: NIH.

EFFECTS OF HEARING LOSS

Cognitive decline and dementia

- People with mild, moderate, and severe hearing loss have a twofold, threefold, and fivefold, respectively, increased risk of developing dementia.
- In people 60 and older, more than 36.4% of the risk of dementia is accounted for by hearing loss.
- For Alzheimer's disease, risk increases by 20% for every 10 decibels of hearing loss. In other words, a mild loss of hearing has a significant impact on the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Falling

- A 25-decibel hearing loss—a mild loss of hearing triples the risk of falling.
- The risk increases with every additional 10 decibels of hearing loss, which increases the chances of falling by 1.4 times more.

Hearing Loss and Diabetes

- Adults with pre-diabetes (blood glucose higher than normal but not high enough for a diabetes diagnosis) have a 30% higher rate of hearing loss compared to those with normal blood sugar.
- Diabetes may lead to hearing loss by damaging nerves and circulation of the inner ear. Autopsies of diabetes patients confirm such damage.

Pain-relieving medications, more risk

- A study at Brigham & Women's Hospital revealed that women who took ibuprofen or acetaminophen two or more days per week increased their risk of hearing loss.
- The more often women use these medications, the higher their risk.

Obesity

Researchers uncovered a relationship between high, body-mass index values and the risk of hearing loss. They found a similar finding with larger waist circumferences.

Greater hospitalizations

- People with mild hearing loss have
- A history for cardiovascular risk factors.
 - A higher rate of hospitalizations.
 - More than 10 days of self-reported poor physical health.

THE PROVEN SOLUTION, DIGITAL HEARING AIDS

For most people with sensorineural hearing loss, digital hearing aids are an

effective treatment. Hearing aids also help avert cognitive decline and prevent falls.

Clarity

Modern acoustic technology is superior for capturing and conveying sound to your ears. What you hear is clear and sharp, not vague or mumbled.

Noise control

Background noise used to be a problem with amplified hearing. But today, digital-hearing technology cleans the sound of busy ambient noise, filtering out annoying distractions before it gets to your ears.

Fidelity

Another important advantage is the improvement in the fidelity of sound. Fidelity describes how true the sound you hear is to the original source. For instance, you will hear a loved one's voice with the character of his or her voice accurately.

Responsive

Today, audiologists can fine-tune digital hearing aids to respond to their patients' hearing loss with far greater specificity, like custom-made clothing.

Connectivity to other electronics

With Bluetooth technology you can hear your cell phone calls through your hearing aids. You can also stream audio from an MP3 player, computer, or TV for a much better audio experience.

If you would like to talk to an audiologist about your hearing or have questions about the brands and models of hearing aids we offer, call one of our offices.

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