



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION

AUDIOLOGY

Information Series

Age-Related Hearing Loss

If you are one of the nearly 10 million Americans over the age of 65, you are likely to have some degree of difficulty hearing. The chance of developing hearing loss increases with age.

Why do people lose their hearing when they age?

People lose their hearing when they age because of changes in the entire hearing system. Hearing loss due to the aging process is called presbycusis. In most cases, hearing loss happens slowly over time. It usually happens in both ears and may affect the person's ability to understand speech.

Why do so many older adults with hearing impairment refuse to use hearing aids?

Some people may not admit they are having trouble hearing. Denial is the most important barrier to hearing aid use.

The following are some of the most common reasons that older people give for not using a hearing aid:

- Everyone is mumbling, or they are not speaking up.
- My hearing is not bad enough for a hearing aid.
- It would make me feel old, or I'm too ashamed to wear one.
- They cost too much.

What happens when you do not treat hearing loss?

People with hearing loss that is not treated are more likely to experience depression and worry compared to those who wear hearing aids.

Hearing loss that is not treated may have serious emotional and social effects on older adults by:

- cutting them off from family members and friends,
- limiting social activities,
- lowering their feeling of good health.

What can help older adults hear better?

Working together with a qualified audiologist, older adults can evaluate the benefits of hearing aid use and learn to overcome some of the adverse effects that hearing loss can have on their quality of life.

In addition, here are some tips that older adults can use for good listening:

- Use appropriate hearing aids and assistive technology.
- Get closer. Don't try to listen to someone from another room. Go where the talker is.
- Take listening breaks. You can focus better if you are rested.
- Ask the person talking to slow down when he or she is talking too fast.
- Ask the speaker to turn so that you can see his or her face.
- Don't bluff! Let the speaker know when you are having trouble hearing or understanding.

What can family members do to help?

Hearing loss affects not only the person with hearing loss but often family members as well. There are some simple things that family members and friends can do to help an older adult carry on a normal conversation:

- Speak clearly and in a normal tone of voice.
- Don't shout. Shouting just makes it harder for the person with hearing loss to understand.
- Get the person's attention before speaking.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth.
- Talk in quieter places.
- Build breaks into your conversation.

NOTES:

For more information about hearing loss, hearing aids, or referral to an ASHA-certified audiologist, contact the:



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