



Signs of Hearing Loss in Adults

Hearing loss affects a great number of people around the world. And it affects them in a variety of ways. Over time, hearing loss can lead to anxiety, depression, isolation, and loneliness. So by leaving hearing loss untreated, a physical condition may also become a psychological one. This is why it is so important to seek a solution promptly.

The symptoms

There are different types of hearing loss that are experienced to various degrees and due to several causes. But the symptoms of hearing loss are basically the same. If you think your hearing might be impaired, answering these questions is the right place to start:

- Do people always comment that the volume on your TV or radio is too loud?
- Have you missed visits and calls from people because you didn't hear the doorbell or telephone ringing?
- Do you have trouble following conversations in crowded or noisy settings?
- Do people seem to mumble and not speak clearly during conversation?
- Do people tell you that you speak too loudly?
- Do you frequently ask people to repeat themselves?
- Do your friends and family suggest that you have a hearing problem?
- Do you have a difficult time understanding the words of popular songs when listening to the radio?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, there is a chance that you may have some degree of hearing loss. We urge you to have a hearing test conducted by a hearing health care professional.

Fact Sheet

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You're not alone

If you do have hearing loss, then it helps to know that you're not alone. In fact, you're one of about 500 million people worldwide. In most countries, this means more than 1 in 6 people have some degree of hearing loss. But it's reassuring to know that a properly fitted hearing instrument can improve communication in at least 90% of people with hearing loss. This means you can be quite confident that there is a solution.

Causes of hearing loss

There are many factors that may affect your hearing, including:

- Long-term exposure to noise
- Heredity
- Illness
- Reactions to medications
- Injury
- Ear wax
- Aging

Noise-induced hearing loss

Hearing damage can already begin at a continuous stress level of 85 dB. If you listen to loud music at a concert or on your MP3 player, for example, you may feel that you cannot hear so well afterwards. This happens because the fine hair cells of your hearing organ are temporarily damaged. After a period of quiet, they recover. This is called a temporary threshold shift, TTS.

However, if you repeatedly subject yourself, over longer periods of time to extreme noise stress, these fine hair cells will become severely damaged with no chance of regeneration. This is called a permanent threshold shift, PTS.

Listening to loud music at concerts, discos or through headsets can be especially dangerous. The sound intensities through headsets, for instance, can easily reach 110-120 dB. A sudden loud explosive sound like a firecracker can also cause noise induced hearing loss.

People in loud work environments are particularly at risk. Construction workers, factory workers, airport tarmac workers and musicians should wear hearing protection.

Another effect of noise stress can be tinnitus. This is when one or both ears perceive sound for which there is no corresponding external source. In other words, "hearing" sounds that don't actually exist. It is often described as a ringing in the ears, but it can occur in a variety of forms and sound levels.

What can you do?

The only reasonable alternative is prevention, so wear hearing protection! There are many possibilities from commercially available earplugs and ear muffs to individually fitted ear fittings with different filter systems.

