

Hearing Loss and Older Adults

Hearing loss is a common problem in older adults. About one-third of older adults have hearing loss, and the chance of developing it increases with age.

Causes of hearing loss include genetic variations, loud noise, age-related changes, and certain medications. Health conditions common in older people, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, can contribute to hearing loss.

Signs of Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can range from mild to total, and people might not realize they have it. Talk with your doctor if you:

- Have trouble understanding people over the phone
- Find it hard to follow conversations
- Often ask people to repeat themselves
- Need to turn up the TV volume higher than other people do
- Struggle to understand what others are saying because of background noise
- Think that others seem to mumble

What Can Help?

There are ways to make living with hearing loss easier.



If you have hearing problems:

- Tell your family and friends you have trouble hearing.
- Ask people to face you and to speak louder and more clearly.
- Pay attention to what is being said and to facial expressions or gestures.
- When listening, place yourself between the speaker and any background noise.

Speaking with someone who has trouble hearing:

- In a group, make a point to include people with hearing loss in the conversation.
- Face the person and speak clearly. Maintain eye contact.
- Speak a little louder than normal, but don't shout.
- Repeat yourself if necessary, using different words.



Devices To Help With Hearing Loss

There are assistive devices available that can amplify sounds, provide alerts, and help people with hearing loss communicate with others. These devices include:

- Alert systems that work with doorbells, smoke detectors, and alarm clocks
- Devices that use keyboards, touch screens, or text-to-speech technology
- Hearing aids, available by prescription or over the counter
- Cochlear implants (requires surgical placement)



Risks of Untreated Hearing Loss

Some people may not want to admit they have trouble hearing. But if ignored or left untreated, hearing problems can get worse. Hearing loss is also associated with other health concerns, including:

- Faster cognitive decline
- Increased risk of developing dementia
- Depression, social isolation, and loneliness resulting from frustration or embarrassment
- Safety concerns, including an increased risk of falls and issues with driving safely

If you think you or a loved one has a hearing problem, seek professional advice. Your family doctor may be able to diagnose and treat the problem, or they can refer you to other experts.



To learn more about hearing loss, visit www.nia.nih.gov/hearing-loss.