

# Get the Facts on Age-Related Hearing Loss

Would you wait **7 years** if you needed by-pass surgery?

**Of course not!**

Then why **wait** to get your  
**hearing checked?**



## Facts:

Hearing loss affects nearly two-thirds of people age 70 and older in the United States. It can be associated with many health problems, including dementia. However, it often goes unrecognized or untreated. But help is available!

The average time lapse between noticing a reduction in hearing and getting professional help and/or acquiring hearing aids is seven years.<sup>1</sup>

According to a report published in the *Journal of American Medical Association*<sup>2</sup> hearing loss represents a:

- 52% greater risk of dementia
- 41% higher risk of depression
- 30% greater risk for falls
- 50% more hospital stays
- 44% higher risk of being readmitted to the hospital within 30 days.

Hearing loss can take many forms. It may come on suddenly or gradually. It can range from mild loss, where a person might miss high-pitched sounds, to a total loss of hearing.

It can be caused by many factors, including:

- aging
- loud noise
- heredity
- changes to the ear
- certain health conditions or medications

When hearing loss is gradual, older adults may not realize that they have lost some of their ability to hear or may be embarrassed to admit to the problem. Hearing aids and other devices often can help.

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders at the National Institutes of Health, fewer than 30% of adults aged 70 and older who could benefit from hearing aids have ever used them. Denial of the problem and concerns about cost may be two reasons for this. But delay in getting hearing aids can worsen feelings of loneliness and isolation and lead to other health concerns.

## How can I tell if I have a hearing problem?

Sometimes people don't realize that they have a hearing problem. You should see your doctor if you:

- have trouble hearing over the telephone
- find it hard to follow conversations when two or more people are talking
- often ask people to repeat what they are saying
- need to turn up the TV volume so loud that others complain
- find background noise troublesome
- think that others seem to mumble



## What can I do?

Hearing problems can be serious. If you think you have a hearing problem, it is important that you seek advice from a health care provider. There are several types of professionals who can help you. You might start with: your **primary care physician**, an **otolaryngologist** who studies diseases of ear, nose, and throat, an **audiologist** who evaluates hearing loss, or a **hearing aid specialist**. Each has a different type of training and expertise.

## What treatments and devices can help?

Your treatment will depend on how serious your hearing loss is. Some treatments may work better for you than others. There are a number of devices and aids that can help with hearing loss. They differ by design, technology, and special features. Some have earpieces to direct the flow of sound into the ear and enhance sound quality. Others go behind the ear.

The best solution for you will depend on the severity of your hearing loss, your listening needs, and your lifestyle. You may need to allow some adjustment time to get used to your new device or treatment.

In addition to hearing aids, other products, procedures, and devices to improve hearing include:

- Assistive Listening Devices
- Cochlear Implants
- Implantable Middle Ear Hearing Devices
- Bone-anchored Hearing Aids
- Personal Sound Amplification Products (PSAPs).

Learn more at [www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing-aids](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing-aids)

## Financial assistance?

Some health insurers provide coverage for hearing tests and hearing aids. Check with your insurance provider, including Medicare and Medicare Advantage to see if you qualify for hearing tests and a hearing aid benefit. Medicaid coverage for hearing tests and hearing aids is limited in Maryland.

## Resources and websites:

- AARP Hearing Center  
800-299-9195  
<https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/hearing-resource-center>
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
800-638-8255 and 301-296-5650 (TTY)  
[www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)
- American Tinnitus Association  
800-634-8978  
[www.ata.org](http://www.ata.org)
- Family Hearing Center provides the local community with hearing testing and hearing aid services.  
301-738-1415  
[www.ttlc.org/family-hearing-center](http://www.ttlc.org/family-hearing-center)
- Hearing Loss Association of America  
301-657-2248  
[www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)
- The Johns Hopkins Cochlear Center for Hearing and Public Health  
[www.jhucochlearcenter.org](http://www.jhucochlearcenter.org)
- National Institute on Aging, NIH  
301-496-1752  
[www.nia.nih.gov/health/hearing-loss-common-problem-older-adults#devices](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/hearing-loss-common-problem-older-adults#devices)
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders  
800-241-1044 and 800-241-1055 (TTY/toll-free)  
[www.nidcd.nih.gov](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
888-463-6332  
[www.fda.gov/medical-devices/consumer-products/hearing-aids](http://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/consumer-products/hearing-aids)

If you are a veteran, check with the VA to see whether you qualify for benefits and hearing-related services, including hearing aids. The VA is the single largest provider of hearing aids in the United States. [www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/ss20190521-hearing-loss](http://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/ss20190521-hearing-loss)

1 Beck DL, Alcock CJ. Right product; Wrong message. *Hearing Review*. 2014;21(4): 16-21).

2 Reed NS, Altan A, Deal JA, et al. Trends in Health Care Costs and Utilization Associated With Untreated Hearing Loss Over 10 Years. *JAMA Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2019;145(1):27-34. doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2018.2875

