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Age-Related Hearing Loss

One in three people older than age 60 have hearing loss; one in two people older than age 85 have hearing loss.¹

Hearing loss related to age is called presbycusis. It is a combination of changes to the

- Structures of the inner ear
- Blood flow to the inner ear
- Hearing nerve
- How the brain processes speech and sound

Presbycusis typically is a high-pitched hearing loss that can be noticed by subtle changes in hearing over time.

Common Signs of Hearing Loss

- Asking people to repeat what they say.
- Feeling like others are always mumbling or not speaking clearly.
- Difficulty hearing or understanding speech in noisy environments.
- Missing words or phrases on the telephone.
- Turning the volume up on the television or radio louder than normal.

Hearing loss due to aging can be worsened by other factors such as diabetes, poor circulation, noise exposure, and certain medications.

- 25 percent of adults between the ages of 65 and 75 years suffer from hearing loss.¹
- 50 percent of adults 75 years and older suffer from hearing loss.¹

Prevention

Although hearing loss with age is common, there are some steps you can take to prevent your hearing loss from getting worse. Daily considerations include avoiding loud sounds and using ear protection when exposed to loud sounds.

The “use it or lose it” principle applies to our ears. Unmanaged hearing loss can lead to deteriorated understanding of speech over time. Dealing with hearing loss early rather than later or putting it off is highly recommended.

People with unmanaged hearing loss often experience a decreased quality of life. Unmanaged hearing loss can lead to sadness, depression, anxiety, paranoia, and poor social relationships. Hearing loss can also lead to more fatigue because of your increased effort to understand speech.

Hearing loss is managed using technology and improving communication strategies. Your audiologist can help you determine if hearing aids, cochlear implants, or other assistive listening devices are appropriate for you.

Role of Audiologists

Audiologists identify, diagnose, and provide treatment options for patients with hearing loss and dizziness. They work closely with physicians, when necessary, and are an important part of the management team.

Do you think you or a family member may have a hearing loss? Click on the “Find an Audiologist” link at www.audiology.org to locate and set up an appointment with an audiologist in your area.

¹ National Institute on Deafness and Other Communicative Disorders (NIDCD) www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-hearing