

Cognitive Decline

More than 5 million Americans live with Alzheimer's disease.¹

Hearing loss is a sudden or gradual change in how well you can hear. Hearing loss is one of the most common conditions in older adults.² As we get older, we are also more at risk for dementia or Alzheimer's disease, compounding the issues from both conditions.

What Is Dementia?

Dementia is a condition that may include any or all of the following: memory loss, language problems, personality change, or thinking problems. The most common type of dementia is Alzheimer's disease. Dementia symptoms generally increase over time.¹

Hearing Loss and Dementia

Hearing loss and dementia are more common in older adults; however, there is no evidence to report that hearing loss causes dementia. Using hearing aids has not been shown to slow down cognitive decline. While it is possible that there is a similar underlying process causing hearing loss and dementia, other explanations for the relationship between hearing loss and cognitive decline include

- Hearing loss leads to social isolation which is a known risk factor for dementia
- People with hearing loss work very hard to listen to and understand speech, often at the expense of memory

What can you do?

Managing your hearing loss is very important. The best way to decrease the progression of dementia is to stay active and engaged in social interactions. Managing hearing loss can help reduce social withdrawal and isolation. Some of the benefits of hearing loss management include

- Improved communication with friends and family

- Improve quality of life
- Less cognitive effort
- Less fatigue at the end of the day
- Easier social interactions

Can Hearing Aids Help?

Although hearing aids will not prevent dementia, they will help to make listening easier by reducing your effort to hear! Unmanaged hearing loss can lead to withdrawing from social interactions, depression, and reduced self-efficacy which are all risks for cognitive decline.³

Role of Audiologists

Audiologists identify, diagnose, and provide treatment options for patients with hearing loss and dizziness. An audiologist can work with you to find your hearing health solution.

Do you think you or a family member may have 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.

References

1. Alzheimer's Association. 2017 Alzheimer's disease facts and figures. Retrieved 16 October 2017 <http://www.alz.org/facts/>
2. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communicative Disorders (NIDCD). Retrieved 13 October 2017 <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/age-related-hearing-loss>
3. Dawes P et al. 2015. Hearing loss and cognition: the role of hearing aids, social isolation and depression. *PLOS One* doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0119616