

Open the door to a new world of better hearing

A short guide to better hearing







Don't let your hearing loss shut you out from family, friends and life

Your sense of hearing is a vital link to your world – a source of pleasure, information and communication.

If you have a hearing loss you can take control of the situation. Hearing loss should not get in the way of enjoying your life.

Your sense of hearing is precious

Hearing contributes to personal safety, emotional well-being, and independence. Through your hearing you are able to communicate directly with others and experience the sounds in your environment.

It's no wonder that hearing loss can be a challenge! Studies have linked the effects of untreated hearing loss to stress, depression, isolation, reduced earning power, and even health issues. But thanks to major strides in the field of hearing care, there are solutions for you that can improve your life.

You are not alone

Hearing loss often occurs naturally, as people get older. We commonly associate hearing loss with advancing age but that is not the whole picture. Although hearing loss is common in older adults, affecting approximately 30% of people over age 60, hearing changes can occur in one's 30's and 40's. A surprising fact is that 65% of individuals with hearing loss are below retirement age.

Because hearing loss occurs so gradually, it may be hard to recognize a change in one's own hearing. Often it's a friend, co-worker or family member that points it out. It may be hard to believe that it's happening to you.

If you suspect that your hearing may be changing, it's up to you to be alert to the signs and have your hearing tested by a qualified professional. After all, people get their eyes tested and their teeth checked on a regular basis, so why not look after your ears too? Consider the importance of hearing sounds around you. You can get help and get so much more out of life.



Did you know?

More than 15% of the US population has hearing loss that affects everyday life. That's more than 37 million people.

Did you know?

Regular exposure to loud noise may accelerate hearing loss. The risk intensifies with greater decibel levels and longer exposure. Levels of 80 dB and greater present a significant risk to your hearing.

What causes hearing loss?

Close your eyes and concentrate. Listen to the sounds around you – the steady hum of a lawnmower, perhaps a car passing by, or children playing outside. What you are experiencing are the “vibrations” of sound. The human ear is normally remarkably sensitive to a wide range of sounds. Sound vibrations are processed by the ears, the nervous system and the brain, becoming what we perceive as “sound signals”.

Our ears are very delicate instruments, and our ability to hear can diminish for a number of reasons. Family history, certain medical conditions, and advancing age are some common factors that may cause part of the ear’s delicate mechanism to break down or wear out.

Excessive noise exposure is the number one reason for hearing loss. Many work settings and recreational activities are quite noisy and can be damaging to your inner ear. It is wise to avoid high volume levels on your car stereo and portable audio devices and to wear earplugs at concerts and in other noisy places.

No matter what the cause, the real problem is that most people don’t know that they can do something to improve their hearing.

Decibel levels of common sounds



Jet Engine Takeoff - **140** dB



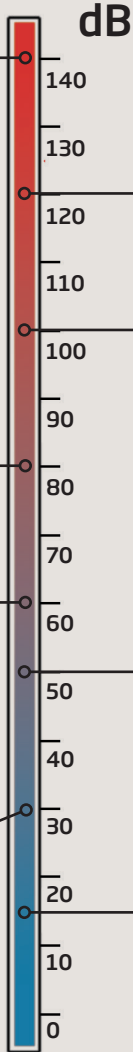
Baby Crying - **80** dB



Conversational Speech - **60** dB



Whisper - **30** dB



Jackhammer - **120** dB



Train - **100** dB



Rainfall - **50** dB



Leaves Rustling - **15** dB



How to tell whether you have a hearing loss

Hearing changes often do not result in an overall loss of volume. Some sounds remain as audible as they always were, yet others become harder to hear, and some conversations require more attentiveness. You might notice that words just don't sound clear. Why is clarity affected? Many people with hearing loss find it especially difficult to hear certain sounds because their hearing loss affects a certain range of pitches. In typical hearing loss, softer, higher pitched sounds become harder to hear, particularly from a distance.

Speech has many quiet, rapidly changing high pitched sounds. A lot of guesswork may be needed to understand the actual word if some

of the speech sounds are not heard clearly. An example is the word "fit" which can easily be confused with "sit", "tick" or "sick". Conversations become more challenging when someone is speaking indirectly, or when there is background noise.

Awareness is the first step

Because people with hearing loss often do fairly well in quiet face-to-face situations, signs of hearing loss often may not be obvious to the doctor. Only a small percentage of doctors routinely screen for hearing loss. It's up to you to be alert to the signs and to tell your doctor if you suspect that your hearing may be changing.

Check YOUR HEARING

Do you suspect that your hearing is not as good as it used to be? The following questions will allow you to make a quick assessment:

- | | Yes | No | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do people seem to mumble or speak in a softer voice than they used to? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Do you find it difficult to hear the doorbell or the telephone ring? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you feel tired or irritable after a long conversation? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Is it difficult to carry on a telephone conversation? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you sometimes miss key words in a sentence, or frequently need to ask people to repeat themselves? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Do you find it challenging to pinpoint the location of an object (e.g. an alarm clock or a telephone) from the noise it makes? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. When you are in a group, or in a crowded restaurant, is it difficult for you to follow the conversation? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Has someone close to you mentioned that you might have a problem with your hearing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. When you are together with other people, does background noise bother you? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 6. Do you often need to turn up the volume on your TV or radio? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |

(((If you have answered "yes" to one or more of the above questions, you will benefit from a hearing consultation.)))

Did you know?

Noises and sounds you hear are actually a blend of different pitches or frequencies. Some sounds are high pitched, such as consonants 'f', 's' or 't'. Others are low pitched, such as vowels 'a', and 'u'.

Your hearing consultation

Only a qualified hearing care professional can tell you whether you have a hearing loss and recommend the best course of action. People experience relief when they learn the facts and gain a strong sense of control over their situation.

It's very easy to schedule a visit with your hearing care professional. During your visit, he or she will conduct a hearing examination and let you know your results.

Your hearing care professional will review your hearing history to understand what factors have influenced your hearing, and also to get more information on your personal hearing needs:

- *How you think you are doing in different situations*
- *What you are doing to deal with hearing issues in your everyday life*
- *Your hearing "wish list" – in what situations do you need improvement*

The visit may include a hearing evaluation and a listening experience with hearing devices, when appropriate.

As your appointment approaches, it is a good idea to start thinking about these questions.

Bring someone with you

Because the sense of hearing is of such great social importance, the decision to seek hearing help is very often a family event. Sometimes it is a spouse, son, daughter or friend who first recognizes that there may be a problem. You may wish to ask someone close to you whether they are aware of any difficulties you may be having, and how it is affecting them. Many hearing care professionals prefer that you bring a spouse, family member or friend to the visit. If hearing instruments are recommended, it is helpful to have someone present who would be involved in that decision process, to participate in the consultation.



Next steps

Your hearing care professional can advise you about the nature of your hearing loss and recommend next steps. Fortunately, there are many ways to help people with hearing loss. Hearing instruments can help most people with hearing loss. It is easy to try a hearing instrument right in the office or at home. Wearing hearing instruments can improve your quality of life.

It's never too late to make a positive difference in your life. Contact your hearing care professional today.

Hearing Care Professional: _____

Telephone number: _____

Date of fitting: _____

Date of follow-up: _____

