

Hope & Healing

Hearing Loss What To Do About Hearing Loss

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

If you begin to lose your hearing, the loss may not be so evident to you. At first you may misunderstand words in a conversation. A song may not sound just right, or you may not hear the doorbell ring. Loss of hearing usually develops gradually and can range from very slight to total loss.

In the United States more than 10 million Americans have lost part of their hearing. Many of these are old persons. Studies show that 50% of those age 75 through 79 suffer some hearing loss.

What Happens in Hearing Loss _____

- Words are difficult to make out.
- Words sound slurred or mumbled, and are especially hard to hear or make out in a room filled with people talking.
- Certain sounds are loud enough to be annoying.
- There may be hissing or ringing sound in the ears. This is constant in some people and occasional in others.
- TV shows, concerts, or social gatherings are less enjoyable because the words aren't clear.

Why it is Important to Detect Hearing Loss _____

Hearing loss that is ignored creates psychological disturbances because of the frustration of dealing with other people by being unable to understand what they are saying. Communications break down. Choices of social and leisure activities are limited. Social

withdrawal may occur to avoid the frustration and embarrassment that comes from not being able to understand what is said. The person losing hearing may become suspicious of relatives and friends who "mumble" or don't speak up.

Gradually the person losing hearing may find their quality of life slipping and because of their being unable to understand, they may be wrongly labeled as "confused" or "uncooperative." In time, if this gets more severe, they may feel powerless and become depressed and withdraw from their usual activities.

The Diagnosis of Hearing Loss _____

Many things can cause hearing loss. Exposure to loud noises over a long period of time, virus infections, stroke, head injuries, brain tumors, heredity, certain medications, and age-related changes in the ear, are among the common causes. Sometimes it is a simple thing, like the blockage of the ear canal with wax. When this happens the wax can be removed in the doctor's office and hearing is restored.

More complicated cases are usually referred to an audiologist for precise, but painless tests that locate the trouble and give an idea of its cause. Then, the patient is either referred to an ear, nose, throat specialist for specialized treatment, or to a hearing aid center to be fitted for a hearing aid.

Home-Style Hearing Tests _____

If a loved one seems to be hearing less well and you want to convince him or her to seek professional help, try these gentle tests:

- Have the person sit down and cross his feet and rub his shoes together.

Can he hear the sound the rubbing makes?

- Can he hear the TV or radio when it is set at a sound level pleasant to your ears?
- Can he hear a telephone equally well with each ear?

If there is difficulty with these hearing checks, there may indeed be a mild hearing loss that needs evaluation.

Treatment of Hearing Loss _____

Hearing is sometimes restored by something as simple as removing wax blocking the ear canal. Sometimes surgery will restore hearing. Sometimes a hearing aid can help.

Preparing for a Hearing Aid

Before you can buy a hearing aid, you must obtain a statement from your doctor saying that your hearing has been medically evaluated and that you might benefit from a hearing aid. Or, if you have not had your hearing professionally evaluated, and you still wish to try a hearing aid, you must sign a statement that says you do not desire an examination.

Either way you must have professional advice about the design, model, and hearing aid brand best for

you. This advice can be given by the audiologist who tests your hearing in preparation for a hearing aid.

Buying A Hearing Aid

The audiologist will determine your hearing level and understanding of speech in each ear and your ability to handle the controls of the hearing aid, and answer your questions about comfort and appearance.

Ask the hearing aid dealer whether he or she will be available to make adjustments, offer advice, make repairs and honor the warranty. Remember you are buying a service as well as a product. Before deciding where to buy a hearing aid, ask around for recommendations from friends, family members, and acquaintances.

Buy a hearing aid with only those features you need. The most costly hearing aid may not do as well for you as one that costs less. And, try one for a while before you agree to buy two. One may do very well and be all you need. It usually takes about a month to get comfortable with a hearing aid.

Other Help

Special help is available for special cases. Speech reading and auditory training can help in your hearing aid orientation as well as help you identify and handle special communication problems. Both of these can keep your hearing loss from being such a burden on you.

Types of Hearing Aids _____

There are three basic types of hearing aids:

- **In the Ear Aid.** These lie flush with the outer part of your ear. They are useful in all but the most severe cases of hearing loss.
- **In the Canal Aid.** These fit entirely within the ear canal. They are useful for mild to moderate hearing loss.
- **Behind the Ear Aid.** These are useful for almost all types of hearing loss when an aid will help. They are

the easiest to handle because of their size.

If You Have a Hearing Problem _____

Call your doctor for an exam. If you have Medicare, most of the expense of the exam will be covered. Medicare will not pay for the hearing aid. Your doctor will make the arrangements for you to see a specialist if this is necessary. In the meantime:

- Ask people to repeat what they said if you didn't understand it.
- Try to reduce background noise from TV, stereo, and radio.
- Tell people that you have a hearing problem and what they can do to make communications easier.

If You Know Someone with a Hearing Problem _____

- Speak at your normal rate.
- Speak to the person at a distance of 3 to 6 feet. Position yourself so that your face is visible. Don't chew, eat, or cover your mouth while speaking.
- Don't speak directly into the listener's ear.
- If the listener doesn't understand what you said, repeat the idea in short, simple sentences.
- Include the person with hearing loss in all discussions. Don't allow them to feel isolated.

Summary _____

Much can be done to keep the person with hearing loss in the mainstream of life. If you know someone with a hearing problem, encourage them to get help. Plus, do your part to help so that their own lives may be more fulfilled.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Now

Many of the people in doctors' offices are there because of emotional problems alone. Anxiety and worry cause a part of the reaction to disease as well as a cause. Other persons in doctors' offices have heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or some other physical illness. And, many of them are short on money.

Note: The big illness in doctors' offices is procrastination.

People put off decisions that would have corrected the wrong course. Then, a crisis strikes or they're too old or too sick.

Remember: God wants to heal you now.

God is ready when you are. The time to be happy is now and the place is where you are.

Don't keep inventing postponements or making excuses until it's too late.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.