



Seniors Can Face Age-related Hearing Loss

How You Can Prevent and Minimize the Impact

If you gather ten people in a room and check their hearing, the chances are at least one of them will suffer from some kind of hearing loss. The older the group is, the greater the number with hearing loss is likely to be.

Now hear this...

You may have hearing loss, and not even be aware of it. People of all ages experience gradual loss of their hearing, often due to the natural aging process or long exposure to loud noise. Other causes of hearing loss include viruses or bacteria, heart conditions or stroke, head injuries, tumors, and certain medications. The treatment for hearing loss will depend on your diagnosis.

Age-related causes of hearing loss are inevitable, usually caused by gradual deterioration of the tiny hairs lining the inner ear that vibrate along with sounds. But what can be prevented the other typical cause of hearing loss - overexposure to loud noises that can damage your ability to hear.

Wear hearing protectors, especially if you must work in an excessively noisy environment. You should also wear them when using power tools, noisy yard equipment, or firearms, or riding a motorcycle or snowmobile. Hearing protectors come in two forms: earplugs and earmuffs.

Ways to improve your situational hearing:

- Eliminate or lower unnecessary noises around you.
- Let friends and family know about your hearing loss and ask them to speak slowly and more clearly.
- Ask people to face you when they are speaking to you, so you can watch their faces and see their expressions.
- Use sound amplifying devices on phones.
- Use personal listening systems to reduce background noise.
- Get a hearing aid if you need one.

Tips to maintain hearing health:

- If you work in noisy places or commute to work in noisy traffic or construction, choose quiet leisure activities instead of noisy ones.
- Develop the habit of wearing earplugs when you know you will be exposed to noise for a long time.
- Earplugs quiet about 25 decibels of sound and can mean the difference between a dangerous and a safe level of noise.
- Try not to use several noisy machines at the same time.

If you feel you or a loved one is suffering from hearing loss, you should consult an otolaryngologist for a medical diagnosis. For more information, go to www.entnet.org.