

# CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE

## PATIENT INFORMATION

### The Impact of Age-Related Hearing Loss<sup>1</sup>

Age-related hearing loss (ARHL) is a type of hearing loss that occurs over time as you age. It is the most common sensory disorder in the older population. ARHL develops gradually and symmetrically, meaning it affects both ears similarly.

The impact of ARHL goes beyond just limiting your ability to communicate. It is linked to issues such as dementia, depression, heart problems, and falls. Detecting hearing loss early and taking appropriate steps can help minimize the negative effects. Hearing loss can be managed with amplification, such as hearing aids and assistive listening devices, and by implementing effective communication strategies.

The table below explains the impacts of hearing loss in greater detail and how improved hearing and communication can lessen these concerns.

THE IMPACTS OF AGE-RELATED HEARING LOSS	
<b>Communication</b>	Untreated hearing loss limits what you can hear and understand. This can affect relationships at home, work, and in healthcare settings. Improved hearing can improve communication with your family, friends, coworkers, as well as health care providers.
<b>Safety</b>	Untreated ARHL may increase the risk of safety issues. Hearing is essential for situational awareness and can affect your ability to hear and understand potential safety warnings. Studies show that hearing loss is linked to increased work-related injuries. Improved hearing increases your awareness of your surroundings and your ability to hear alerts and warnings.
<b>Function and Health</b>	Untreated ARHL is associated with increased balance problems, falls, heart problems, joint problems, and other issues. It also can lower your ability to complete daily activities around the house or at work. Improving your hearing can alleviate these concerns and enhance your day-to-day functioning.
<b>Cognition</b>	Studies show a clear association between untreated ARHL and cognitive decline. This includes your ability to think, learn, remember, and solve problems. Hearing loss may impact memory loss, difficulty following conversations/directions, or losing your thoughts. Studies show that the use of properly fitted hearing aids may reduce the risk of developing dementia and can reduce cognitive decline.
<b>Quality of Life</b>	Untreated ARHL significantly reduces the quality of life for individuals and their families. Listening effort and fatigue, along with lower levels of social, physical, and mental activities, contribute to this reduction. Improving hearing loss can lower the risk of depression and social isolation, improving overall quality of life. Family members also may experience reduced quality of life, but positive coping strategies can help.
<b>Adherence to Treatment Recommendations and Referrals</b>	It is important that you follow your provider's treatment recommendations and referrals to get the maximum results from your plan of care. This includes keeping your appointments and asking questions if you do not understand your plan of care. Bring a family member or friend with you to your appointments as you may desire.

<sup>1</sup> Tsai Do, BS, Bush, ML, Weinrich, HM, et al. Clinical Practice Guideline: Age-Related Hearing Loss. *Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery*. 2024;171(S1):S1-S54

#### ABOUT THE AAO-HNS/F

The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) represents approximately 13,000 specialists worldwide who treat the ear, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The AAO-HNS Foundation works to advance the art, science, and ethical practice of otolaryngology-head and neck surgery through education, research, and quality measurement.