

# Hearing Loss

## Spotlight on: Adults



COMMUNICATION  
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Better Hearing & Speech Month

Hearing loss is one of the most common chronic health conditions in adults—yet far too often, it is left untreated. While many adults think hearing loss is simply a nuisance that comes with aging, it is much more. Hearing loss can affect every area of a person's life, including physical health, mental health, career success, social life, personal relationships, and overall quality of life. Treatment can help!

**Key Fact:** Despite the high prevalence of hearing loss, only approximately 1 in 7 adults (14%) over the age of 50 with a hearing loss who could benefit from amplification uses a hearing aid.

**More Than a Nuisance:** Although hearing loss can have serious consequences on its own, research has shown that it is also associated with the following:

- **Dementia.** Adults with mild, moderate, and severe hearing loss were 2, 3, and 5 times more susceptible, respectively, to dementia, according to Johns Hopkins research.
- **Diabetes.** People with diabetes were twice as likely to have hearing loss as people without the disease, a study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* showed.
- **Falls.** People with mild hearing loss, > 25 dB, were nearly 3 times more likely to have a history of falling, according to Johns Hopkins research. Every additional 10 decibels of hearing loss increased the chances of falling by 140%.
- **Mortality.** A study in *JAMA Otolaryngology–Head & Neck Surgery* found that among U.S. adults aged 70 and up, those with hearing loss were 21%–39% more likely to die over the next several years than those without hearing loss. Although researchers note that the findings are not evidence that hearing loss *causes* earlier death, it demonstrates the need to take hearing loss seriously.
- **Social Isolation and Depression.** Researchers from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders have found a strong association between hearing loss and depression among U.S. adults of all ages.

**Worth Getting Tested:** Adults with questions about their hearing can take a self-test at [www.asha.org/public/hearing](http://www.asha.org/public/hearing). This will reveal whether a full hearing evaluation by an audiologist is recommended. Audiologists help people with hearing loss in a variety of ways, including custom-fitting hearing aids/assistive technology and providing audiologic rehabilitation (which focuses on helping people live well with their hearing loss).

**Treatment Transforms:** A large-scale survey from the National Council on Aging showed that people who used hearing aids reported significant improvements in many areas of their lives, including relationships at home, mental health, sense of safety, social life, and life overall.



**Audiologists can help!**

Learn more at [www.asha.org/public](http://www.asha.org/public).



**ASHA**

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Speech-Language-Hearing  
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