

Hearing checkups for diabetics necessary



**Diane
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People with diabetes are urged to have their hearing checked regularly. A new study has found that there is a higher incidence of hearing loss among diabetics.

Patients with diabetes are more than twice as likely as those without the disease to have hearing loss, according to a recent National Institute of Health (NIH) study. Overall, more than 40 percent of people with diabetes in the study had some degree of hearing loss.

"People with diabetes should ask their doctors to check their hearing. This should be routine," said Dr. Sergei Kochkin, executive director of the Better Hearing Institute (BHI). "A hearing check can be invaluable in identifying diabetic patients with potential hearing loss, and giving them an opportunity to receive the treatment they need."

To facilitate hearing checks, the BHI has

designed a Quick Hearing Check to help people quickly assess if they have a hearing loss requiring a comprehensive hearing test by a hearing professional. The quick check is available online at www.hearingcheck.org.

The study, published in the *Annals of International Medicine*, was conducted by researchers who analyzed data from hearing tests, administered from 1999 to 2004, to 5,140 participants in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

Its findings prompted investigators from the NIH to recommend that physicians encourage their patients with diabetes to have their hearing checked.

"For years, physicians who treat people with diabetes have regularly ensured that their patients receive regular vision check-ups," said Dr. William Luxford, BHI board member and an otolaryngologist in Los Angeles. "This important study underscores the need for physicians now to encour-

age each of their patients to get their hearing checked as well."

Both vision loss and hearing loss are associated with diabetes. Studies conducted by BHI show that people with untreated hearing loss have a lower quality of life and even earn less income than people with normal hearing or people who have treated their hearing loss by using hearing aids. Modern hearing aids that use digital technology can help most people with hearing loss. Patients are five times more likely to have their hearing professionally tested if encouraged to do so by their own physicians, according to a MarkeTrak study conducted by Kochkin.

If you have diabetes or know of someone who does, encourage them to see a licensed audiologist to have their hearing tested. If you have additional questions, contact your physician or Diane McVey, MA, CCC-A, audiologist/president of Diles Hearing Centers, Athens and Jackson, at (800) 237-7716.



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