

Paid Advertisement

32 million Americans today are experiencing hearing loss. Are you one of them?

Q How can I recognize a hearing problem?

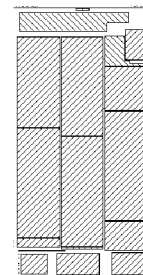
A Most of the time hearing loss begins gradually, without discomfort or pain. What's more, family members often learn to adapt to it, without even realizing they are doing it. Here are some questions to ask yourself to determine whether hearing loss is present:

- A) You often ask people to repeat themselves
- B) You have trouble following conversations with more than two people
- C) You have difficulty hearing what is said unless you're facing the speaker
- D) It sounds like other people are mumbling or slurring their words
- E) You struggle to hear in crowded places like restaurants, malls and meeting rooms
- F) You have a hard time hearing women or children
- G) You prefer the TV or radio volume louder than others
- H) You experience ringing or buzzing in your ears

Q If I had a hearing loss, wouldn't my family doctor have told me?

A Only about 13% of physicians routinely screen for hearing loss. Since most people with hearing impairments hear just fine in quiet environments (like your doctor's office), it can be very difficult for your physician to recognize this problem. Only a trained hearing professional can determine the severity of your hearing problem, whether or not you could benefit from a hearing aid, and which type would be best for you.

Q What causes hearing loss?



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A There are several causes. The main ones include aging, excessive noise, genetics, birth defects, infections to the head or ear, and reaction to drugs or cancer treatment.

Q Doesn't hearing loss only affect old people?

A Hearing loss can occur at any time, at any age. In fact, most (65%) people with hearing loss are younger than age 65! There are six million people in the U.S. ages 18-44 with hearing loss, and around one-and-a-half million are school age.

Q Aren't there operations or medications I can take for hearing loss?

A Only 5% of hearing loss in adults can be improved medically or surgically. The vast majority (95%) of Americans with hearing loss are treated with hearing aids.

Q Exactly how will a hearing aid improve my quality of life?

A Receiving treatment for hearing loss can literally transform your life. Research on people with hearing loss and their significant others has shown that hearing aids play a significant factor in a person's social, emotional, psychological and physical well-being.

More specifically, treatment of hearing loss has been shown to improve:

- Communication in relationships
- Intimacy and warmth in family relationships
- Ease in communication
- Earning power
- Sense of control over your life
- Social participation
- Perception of mental functioning
- Emotional stability

When you consider all the benefits of better hearing, you can see that hearing aids hold great potential to positively change your life.

Q Won't wearing a hearing aid make me look old or handicapped?

A A lot of people who know they have a hearing loss

are too embarrassed or feel they're showing weakness if they acknowledge the problem. While you are no doubt concerned about appearance, others will be much less aware of your hearing aid than you. Most hearing aids are very discreet (keep in mind that hairstyle can also play a role).

Ultimately, an untreated hearing loss – and actions like smiling or nodding when you don't understand what's being said – are far more obvious than a hearing aid. Most likely once you have a hearing aid your quality of life will be so improved that cosmetics won't be as much an issue for you. In fact, some hearing aids today even come in bright colors, making hearing aids a fashion statement instead of something to hide!

Q How do hearing aids work?

A At their most basic, hearing aids are microphones that convert sound into electrical signals. An amplifier increases the strength of the signal, then a receiver converts it back to sound and channels it into the ear canal through a small tube or ear mold. A battery is necessary to power the hearing aid and to enable amplification. Today's high quality hearing aids are sophisticated, state-of-the-art instruments that require computer programming to adjust to your specific lifestyle and listening environments.

Q Will a hearing aid actually restore my hearing?

A While no hearing aid (except in cases of very mild hearing loss) can restore your hearing to normal, hearing aids will allow you to hear soft sounds that you couldn't hear before, and will prevent loud sounds from becoming uncomfortably loud for you. Your ability to understand speech may be improved.

Q Will I be able to hear in noisy places?

A No hearing aid can filter out all background noise, but many can reduce some types of background noise so that you can enjoy conversation and improve communication in places like restaurants, business meetings and social gatherings.

Q What are the differences in the types and styles of hearing aids?

A Hearing aids now come in a wide variety of sizes, from those that sit behind the ear to tiny, completely-in-the-canal models. They are all much smaller, more comfortable and discreet than those models even a few years ago plus some of them come in a variety of colors to blend in with your skin tone or hair color.

Q How do I know which one will be best for me?

A There are several factors that will determine which hearing aid will be right one for you. They include the nature and severity of your hearing loss, your lifestyle, your job, your eyesight and dexterity, and the size and shape of your outer ear and inner ear canal. Ultimately, your hearing professional will be able to instruct you on your best choice.

Q How about advances in technology?

A Like many other products (TV's, personal music players, computers), hearing aids have experienced a major technological revolution in the past decade – and especially in the last couple years. These advances have made a huge impact in hearing aid performance and wearer satisfaction. State-of-the-art features include digital technology that allows your hearing aid to be programmed to the types of places you spend most of your time; hearing aids that automatically adjust when you go from one hearing environment to the next; directional hearing aids that help you zero in on voices in noisy areas; the virtual elimination of whistling and buzzing; more “natural” sound; even hearing aids that tell you when it's time for your next hearing check-up or your battery is low.

Q Is there an adjustment period?

A Yes, most people need an adjustment period of up to four months before receiving the full benefit from their hearing aids. You should, however, expect to notice demonstrable benefits during

this trial period.
According to the latest surveys, hearing loss affects 1 in 10 people in the U.S. and 1 in 4 households. Yet as common as it is, only 1 in 5 people with a hearing problem actually seek help.

Communications and participation in today's



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world is important. Left untreated, hearing loss can affect a person's quality of life in countless ways. It can deny the pleasures of conversation, music and sounds from nature. It can also disrupt family life, reduce earning power, and lead to an avoidance of social situations, lack of confidence, frustration, and misunderstandings.

Fortunately, the detection of hearing loss is more advanced and accurate than ever. It all starts with contacting a certified hearing professional who understands today's technology and offers follow-up care. He or she can determine the extent of your problem and find a solution that meets your needs. The following are frequently asked questions about hearing loss intended to provide you information and action steps

towards finding the help you need.

Q Will I need a hearing aid in one ear or two?

A Two-ear hearing (called "binaural") is better than one. If you have hearing loss in only one ear, you may be fine with one hearing aid. Age- and noise-related hearing loss tend to affect both ears, but your hearing profile for each ear is probably different. If there is a loss in both ears, you will probably benefit more with a binaural solution. Today, about two-thirds of new users opt for dual hearing instruments, and as a group they report a higher level of satisfaction than purchasers of a single instrument.

Q How much will a hearing aid cost?

A The price of a hearing aid will vary depending on the specific model and features you need. Whatever the final cost, most hearing aid manufacturers do offer financing plans. You should also check to see if you qualify for free or discounted hearing aids from your employer, union, the Veteran's Administration, insurance provider, HMO or local charity (such as Lion's Club).

Q What about the inexpensive hearing aids I see advertised?

A These inexpensive models are simply amplifiers that will make everything louder (including all the ambient noises around you). They will not, for example, separate human voices from background noises, or hear directional sounds like the more sophisticated hearing instruments available today. It's important you understand your loss and get a product that addresses your individual needs.

Q What if I have a problem with my hearing aid? Is there a guarantee?

A You can typically expect a 30-day trial period with a money-back guarantee, as well as a 1-year

warranty. But it is important to give yourself a reasonable chance to get used to your hearing aid that might include some adjustments to ensure the best results for you.

- Q So if I think I've got a hearing problem, what do I do?**
- A** You need to make an appointment with a hearing specialist for an evaluation, consultation and hearing test. Many hearing care professionals offer this evaluation at no charge.

NPAD0313-00-EE-SL Rev.A 11/07

*All statistics from [Better Hearing Institute](http://betterhearing.org) (betterhearing.org) and [Starkey Laboratories](http://starkey.com) (starkey.com).

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