

Hearing HealthCare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

☀ Summer 2023

What Causes Hearing Loss in Adults?

Hearing loss is one of the most common problems in adults (only *arthritis* and *hypertension* are more common). Several studies suggest that hearing loss is the *most common untreated problem* in people over 50 years of age.

The most common causes of hearing loss in adults are:

Presbycusis. The aging process is the most common cause of hearing loss. The typical loss develops so slowly that the person doesn't notice any change day-to-day or even year after year. And it isn't the loudness of speech that is affected at first. Speech *clarity* is affected more than the *loudness*.

Noise. Exposure to even moderate levels of noise over a long period of time, or to brief high-intensity sounds, can lead to sensorineural hearing loss. The loss is often accompanied by *tinnitus* (ringing, hissing or other noises in the ear). Sources of toxic noise levels include household appliances, lawnmowers, city traffic, guns, loud music, and personal headsets (such as those used with cell phones).

Genetics. Inherited sensorineural hearing loss can occur at any age, including in adulthood. The ear is the most genetically complex organ in the human body, and 20% of our genes are involved in the human inner ear. Scientists estimate that there are 150 to 200 genes that, when damaged, could lead to hearing loss.

Most cases of adult hearing loss are a combination of these causes. Much of age-related hearing loss may be due to more years of exposure to noise and other environmental causes, such as smoking and environmental pollutants. Additional age-related hearing loss may be caused by other health problems, such as diabetes or hypertension, or simply that as people get older they are more likely to experience certain genetic effects.

Restaurant Noise Comes in First Place

"It's just too noisy," is the most common complaint on many restaurant surveys and reviews. And that's from people with normal hearing. Another common complaint is *poor service*.

Have restaurants gotten noisier?

Yes, they have. Along with movies, television shows and the world in general, restaurants have become noisier than ever. The background noise includes music, the clatter of silverware and dishes, and more recently, the blaring sound of television sets in the dining area. The other major source of noise is the voices of other diners who talk loudly because they can't hear each other.



Today's busy and noisy restaurants can make hearing difficult for everyone.

A common complaint of people with normal hearing is difficulty hearing in noisy restaurants.

Changes in restaurant décor are also a factor. Sound absorbing carpets, drapes and tablecloths have been replaced with bare walls, tables and floors that reflect noise back into the room.

There are several steps you can take to cope with noisy restaurants. The most obvious—but not always possible—step is to avoid them. A

Diabetes Increases Risk of Hearing Loss

Diabetes has become more common and affects about 10% of adults in the United States. Almost half of these are undiagnosed.

One hospital study concluded that individuals with diabetes are 30% more likely to have hearing loss. This increased risk was present among persons with diabetes across all ages.

Anyone with diabetes should be screened for hearing loss. Diabetic patients who control their diabetes may also reduce the likelihood of hearing loss.

University of California study found that noise levels in all but "*elegant*" restaurants are loud enough to interfere with normal conversation, *whether or not you have a hearing loss*.

Some restaurant reviews now include a general description of the noise atmosphere. The on-line restaurant review site **Yelp** will sometimes describe whether the noise level in a specific restaurant is *quiet, moderate or loud*.

What else can you do?

Choose your location. Ask to be seated in a quiet area,

away from the kitchen entrance, service areas or large groups. And it's usually best to sit with your back to the wall so your server can't talk from behind you and noise from behind is kept to a minimum.

Limit the size of your group. Dining with two or three others is much easier than dining with a large group.

Order from the menu. Or ask to see a written list of any specials. It can be very challenging to understand when the waiter or waitress quickly presents a long list of specialty items.

Turn it down. If loud music is playing, ask the manager or server if the music can be turned down. Other diners will thank you!

We hope these suggestions make dining out more enjoyable for you. And when you find that a restaurant is just too noisy, remember, you're not alone!

WELCOME

. . . to the Summer issue of our newsletter. We hope you find the information helpful.

Our practice is based on three fundamental principles:

- **Hearing loss is serious**
- **Hearing loss deserves professional care**
- **Hearing aids improve lives**

Do Hearing Aids Just Make Sounds Louder?

Not at all. Today's digital hearing aids are as different from the hearing aids of years ago as today's cars are different from a Model T Ford.

In its day, the Model T Ford was a revolutionary advance in transportation. The first really portable hearing aids were also revolutionary, even though they just made sounds louder. Just as the Model T did for many people, the hearing aids of the 1950s gave greater freedom and independence to people with hearing loss. These aids were possible thanks to the invention of the transistor that replaced bulky vacuum tubes.

In 21st century hearing aids,

transistors have been replaced by computer microchips. Digital processing, directional microphones, speech algorithms, noise suppression and automatic loudness control allow hearing aids to analyze and process speech and noise, rather than just amplify sound. Wireless connectivity to phones and other devices provides greater independence and ease of communication for the hearing aid user.

These advances in hearing aid technology have enabled people with hearing loss to hear better than ever, even in challenging settings. Our goal is to use that technology to make sure that you're hearing as well as possible.

Hearing Care and COVID-19

We have always followed strict procedures for infection control. Because of the continuing coronavirus pandemic, we have instituted additional stringent procedures in accordance with national and professional association guidelines. We know it's vital that we protect your overall health as we provide your hearing health care needs. Stay safe!

Battery warning: Although batteries no longer have any mercury, they can be harmful if swallowed. If someone swallows a battery, call your physician or the National Battery Hotline at (1-800) 498-8666.

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Time To Celebrate

In celebration of our **16th Anniversary**, we are entering all names of patients who purchase new hearing instruments in June, July and August for a drawing to win one of several hearing aid chargers. Winners can choose from a standard desktop charger, or a portable Oticon Smart Charger—perfect for travel!

Winners will be picked on Sept. 15, 2023 and will be notified by phone. Thank you for 16 wonderful years!

Sincerely,

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