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Healthy Insights

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Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is a common problem for older adults. It can be especially frustrating because of its impact on daily life and social activities. [The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders \(http://bit.ly/3K0dgRI\)](http://bit.ly/3K0dgRI) says that 25 percent of people aged 65 to 74 have hearing loss. The number goes up to 50 percent in people aged 75 and older. It's important to recognize the signs of hearing loss, how to prevent it, and how to cope with it.

Know the Signs

Hearing loss can be as mild as not hearing high-pitched sounds, or as severe as a complete loss of hearing (deafness). Age-related hearing loss (presbycusis) occurs over time as someone gets older. With age-related hearing loss, people can experience tinnitus which causes a ringing, clicking, hissing, or buzzing in the ears. Some other signs of hearing loss to look out for are:

- Having trouble following a conversation with two or more people, especially in a noisy place.
- Frequently asking people to repeat what they said.
- Raising the television volume up to a point that annoys others.
- Not being able to hear people over the phone.

If you notice any of these behaviors in your day-to-day life, talk to your doctor.



How to Prevent Hearing Loss

Some forms of hearing loss are due to aging or other health conditions and can't be controlled. However, noise-induced hearing loss, which is damage to the structure of the inner ear because of loud sounds, can be prevented. To prevent it, reduce your exposure to loud noises in the environment that may come from power tools, lawnmowers, trains, radios, and televisions. When these sounds are unavoidable, use protective devices like earmuffs/earplugs and turn down the volume on electronics.

Technology Can Help

Hearing aids are small electronic devices that are worn in or outside the ear to make outside sounds louder. Hearing aids may be prescribed by a doctor or purchased without a prescription (over the counter). **Behind-the-ear, receiver-in-the-canal,** and **open fit aids** have a plastic piece that sits on the outside part of the ear and connects to an earmold that goes inside the ear canal. **In-the-ear, in-the-canal, completely-in-the-canal,** and **invisible-in-canal aids** are placed only on the inside of the ear or canal. Your doctor or a hearing specialist who can measure your hearing loss, called an audiologist, can help you decide which would fit you best.

TYPES OF HEARING AIDS



BEHIND THE EAR



RECEIVER IN THE CANAL/EAR



OPEN FIT



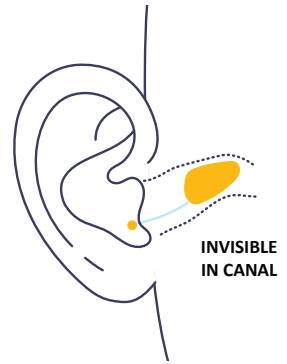
IN THE EAR



IN THE CANAL



COMPLETELY IN THE CANAL



Coping With Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can be challenging. People who have hearing loss may become depressed and remove themselves from social situations. They may feel frustrated and embarrassed about their hearing difficulties. Studies also show that adults with hearing loss have a higher risk of developing dementia. Here are some ways that you can cope with hearing loss and still remain social:

- **Communicate clearly** to family, friends, and those around you that you have a hearing problem and you may need them to repeat themselves from time to time. Ask them to speak loudly and clearly when talking to you.
- **Change your location** if you're in a noisy place and are trying to speak with someone.
- **Be a good listener by watching a person's facial expression** to better understand them.

You also may want to speak to your doctor about seeing an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat doctor) or an audiologist.

Sources

[Hearing Loss: A Common Problem for Older Adults | NIA](#) (bit.ly/3TXGKnh)

[Quick Statistics About Hearing | NIDCD](#) (bit.ly/3K0dgRI)

[Preventing Noise-Induced Hearing Loss | CDC](#) (bit.ly/40lsile)

[Hearing Aids and Personal Sound Amplification Products: What to Know | FDA](#) (bit.ly/42TObjr)



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IPRO Healthy Insights comes from Dr. Clare Bradley, IPRO's Senior Vice President/Chief Medical Officer, a nationally recognized public health advocate.

IPRO is a non-profit organization that works with government agencies, providers and patients to measure and improve healthcare for all. For over 35 years we've made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to make the healthcare system work better.