

Dealing With Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can be frustrating. It can make it hard to understand and follow a doctor's advice, to respond to warnings and to hear doorbells and alarms. Not being able to follow a conversation can also make you feel left out and alone — especially during the holidays, when families and friends gather for dinners and other parties. When many people talk at the same time, it's hard for those with hearing loss to understand what people are saying. But there are ways to treat hearing loss. The most common is to wear a hearing aid.

Hearing loss happens for many reasons. Some people lose their hearing slowly as they age. In fact, hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults. According to a 2003 study, hearing loss is the third most common chronic illness in older Americans, behind high blood pressure and arthritis. Roughly one in three people between the ages of 65 and 74 and nearly half of those 75 and older have hearing loss.

Recognize Hearing Loss

If you answer "yes" to three or more of the questions below, consult with your doctor.

- Do you have a problem hearing over the telephone?
- Do you have trouble following a conversation when 2 or more people are talking at the same time?
- Do people complain that you turn the TV volume up too high?
- Do you have to strain to understand conversations?
- Do you have trouble hearing in a noisy background?
- Do you find yourself asking people to repeat themselves?
- Do many people you talk to seem to mumble (or not speak clearly)?
- Do you misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately?
- Do you have problems understanding the speech of women and children?
- Do people get annoyed because you misunderstand what they say?

For more information and tips presented in this article visit http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2007/December/docs/01features_02.htm.