

OVERVIEW OF ADULT HEARING HEALTH CARE

Important Considerations for Treating Hearing Loss

Some might delay addressing hearing loss because they view it as common to aging. In reality, although hearing loss is more common in older adults, there is no “normal” age-related hearing loss. You should not think that you have to just “deal with” hearing loss. Even mild hearing loss can have a negative impact on quality of life. For example, someone with hearing loss might be at 24 percent increased risk for cognitive impairment (trouble with thinking and remembering), and 30 percent to 40 percent increased rate of cognitive decline (Lin, Ferrucci et al, 2013¹). Skipping treatment for hearing loss can put an individual at risk. More important, using the right hearing devices and getting the right hearing support can increase your overall quality of life. You can enjoy activities you love; you can stay connected with friends, and family; and you can feel more confident and engaged in work or conversations.

Just as damaging as doing nothing to address hearing loss is to use devices that are not appropriate for the existing hearing loss. Simply using a hearing device might not provide benefit and can result in a less than positive experience for you, making you less likely to try a hearing device again. Instead, it is important to select an appropriate device programmed with adequate amplification for the hearing loss. It is equally important to recognize that long-term outcomes improve when hearing aids are obtained early (Davis, Smith et al, 2007²).

Disclaimer: The information in this guide is not intended to replace the services of a qualified audiologist and should not be interpreted as an endorsement of any type or category of hearing device. Rather, this information is available to enhance a consumer’s conversations with audiologists or other healthcare providers about hearing care and hearing devices.

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¹ Lin F, Ferrucci L, An Y, Goh J, Doshi J, Metter E, Resnick S. (2014) Association of hearing impairment with brain volume changes in older adults. *NeuroImage*, 90:84-92.

² Davis A, Smith P, Ferguson M, Stephens D, & Gianopoulos I. (2007) Acceptability, benefit and costs of early screening for hearing disability: A study of potential screening tests and models. *Health Technology Assessment*, 11(42).