

When To Consider A Hearing Aid

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Sometimes there are subtle signs. When out in a restaurant or bar, you cannot understand the conversation around you. The last time you spoke with your niece, nephew, or grandchild on the phone, you kept asking them to repeat. The dialogue in that great new movie you watched was a tangled mess of incomprehensible words. The beautiful melodies in Mozart and Beethoven sound like notes gone wild. You wonder why your significant other mumbles. You can't understand what anyone is saying unless they face you.

What is happening, you ask. Is this about getting older? Are people not speaking up? Constantly piecing together words into something that makes sense is exhausting, and you decide it is not worth the trouble. You retreat into a hermit's life. Staying home is easier on your ears and psyche.

Sometimes people notice a sudden and dramatic loss of hearing in one or both ears. Dizzy spells or nausea might accompany this condition. Experts say that 5,000 people per year become so afflicted. Earwax build up, trauma, an infection, a tumor, or certain drugs can bring on sudden hearing loss. If you abruptly lose your hearing, consider it an emergency.

Most people fail to recognize that they have a hearing problem. Studies have shown that 25% of people aged 65 to 74 might be suffering from hearing loss. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Hearing Disorders, men have a 50% greater chance of developing hearing loss, and they lag behind women in treating their problem. Yet, it is important to come to terms with hearing loss. A Johns Hopkins study indicated that undiagnosed and untreated hearing loss can lead to isolation, dementia, and depression.

I discovered my hearing loss forty-two years ago in an odd way. I was 26, pregnant, and working in hospital administration. One day, a doctor from a nearby office stopped in and said that over the last several days he had noticed how often I ask people to repeat, particularly on the phone. He wrote the name of an ENT physician on a blank piece of paper and slid it my way. Then, seeing my incredulous look, he picked up the phone and made me an appointment.

After an audiogram showed that I had lost twenty-five percent of my hearing, I did not believe that my sensorineural hearing loss was serious enough to treat. I refused a hearing aid. Like most, I waited seven years before purchasing my first aid. By that time, I had lost thirty-five percent of my hearing. I was struggling to hear and robbing myself of a better life.

Hearing is such an important sense. It enables us to socialize, to work, and to communicate with others. Our hearing allows us to enjoy music, movies, and television. We can keep up with current events or know when a dangerous storm might hit our area. If you hear properly, you can pinpoint the direction of sound, your brain's way of orienting you to your surroundings and alerting you to lurking danger.

Always treat hearing issues before they fester. Not all hearing problems are reversible, but all hearing loss is treatable. Hearing aids and peripheral hearing devices have come a long way and do more than amplify noise. Technological advanced hearing devices improve hearing. Coupling a hearing aid with a mini mic allows you to enjoy conversation in a noisy restaurant. Become part of the world around you. Foster your wellbeing. By diagnosing and treating hearing loss, you might find yourself better equipped to engage in life.