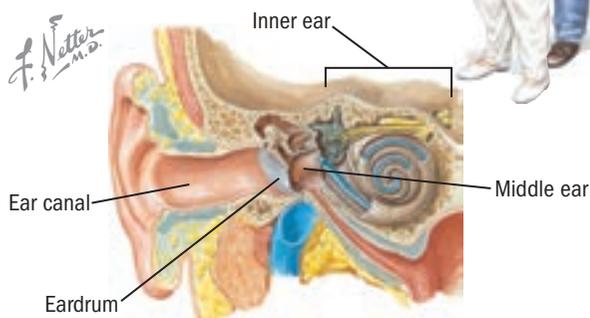


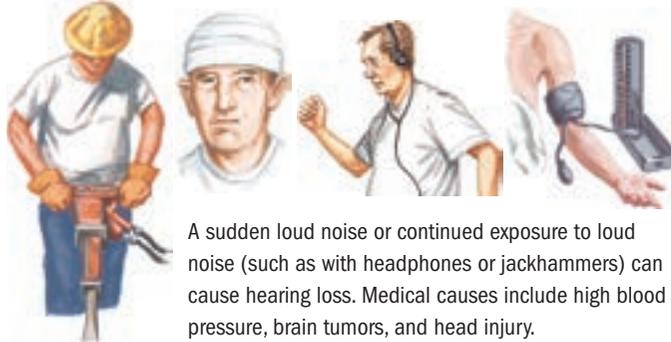
MANAGING YOUR HEARING LOSS (DEAFNESS)



Hearing loss can occur for unknown reasons and at any age, including infancy. Most people older than 65 have some hearing loss.



Hearing loss can result from problems in the ear canal or middle ear that block sound, or in the inner ear or nerves going from the ears to the brain.



A sudden loud noise or continued exposure to loud noise (such as with headphones or jackhammers) can cause hearing loss. Medical causes include high blood pressure, brain tumors, and head injury.



Babies with hearing loss don't respond to sounds. Adults can have ear pain or trouble understanding a conversation. The volume of the television may need to be very high.



Your health care provider will examine your ears and test your hearing (audiometric tests) to make a diagnosis.



What Is Hearing Loss?

Deafness is a decreased ability or complete inability to hear. It may be partial or total and affect one or both ears. Approximately 40% of adults over age 65 have some degree of hearing loss.

What Causes Hearing Loss?

Hearing loss can occur for unknown reasons and at any age, including in infants. The cause can be a problem in the ear canal or middle ear that blocks sound. The inner ear or nerves that carry sound to the brain can also be damaged. Other causes are sudden loud noise or continued exposure to loud noise (as with earphones), viral or bacterial infection of the ear, certain drugs, and puncture of the eardrum.

Medical causes include high blood pressure, brain tumors, head injury, and Paget's disease. Most people older than 65 have some hearing loss.

Risk factors are a family history of deafness and having a job or hobby with exposure to high noise levels (such as rock musicians or jackhammer operators).

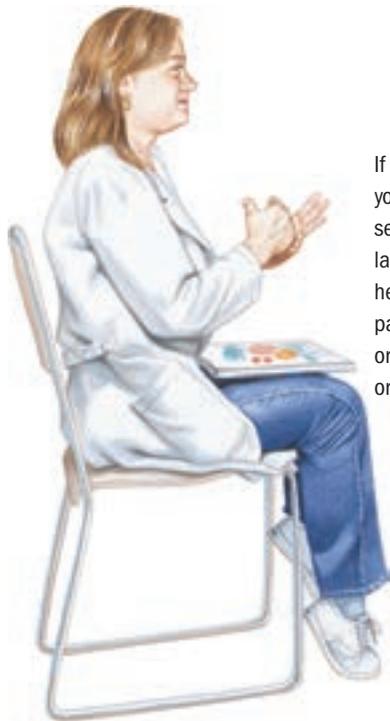
What Are the Symptoms of Hearing Loss?

Infants with hearing loss don't respond to sounds around them, especially startling sounds.

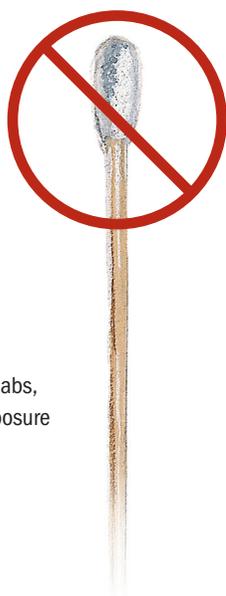
In adults, symptoms include trouble telling the difference among sounds, such as being unable to follow a conversation if there's background noise; turning up the radio or television volume; ringing in the ears; dizziness; and ear pain.

How Is Hearing Loss Diagnosed?

The health care provider will examine the ears and test hearing. You may be referred to an audiologist for audiometry and to be fitted for a hearing aid. Audiometry (test of hearing) uses a device that makes tones of different loudness. Other tests involve using a tuning fork, checking the ability to hear differences between words that sound similar, and measuring how loudly words have to be spoken. If hearing loss seems to be related to the brain, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) may be done. Your health care provider may refer you to an otolaryngologist, a doctor who specializes in the care of the ears, nose, and throat.



If your hearing loss is permanent, your health care provider may send you to a facility to learn sign language and lipreading. Call your health care provider if you have pain in or drainage from your ear or you have dizziness, headaches, or fever.



Don't put anything, such as cotton-tipped swabs, in your ears. Wear ear protection to avoid exposure to loud sounds.



Hearing aids can be helpful. For profound hearing loss (deafness), a cochlear implant, placed inside the ear, can sometimes help.

How Is Hearing Loss Treated?

Treatment depends on the cause. Sometimes, simple earwax removal or eardrum puncture repair may solve the problem. The health care provider will prescribe medicine for an infection. Drugs or exposure to loud noise causing hearing loss should be stopped.

Surgery may sometimes restore hearing. For profound hearing loss (deafness), a cochlear implant can sometimes help. This implant, placed inside the ear, is a type of hearing aid that can make sounds louder. Many people learn to rely on hearing aids.

Even if hearing loss is permanent, people can live normally. The important thing is not to become isolated. A local rehabilitation facility may teach sign language and lipreading. Speech therapy may be necessary.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Hearing Loss:

- ✓ **DO** avoid long-term use or overuse of drugs that cause hearing loss. Talk with your health care provider about possible problem drugs.
- ✓ **DO** get treatment for ear infections, allergies, and respiratory problems that could affect the ear.
- ✓ **DO** avoid long-term exposure to loud noise. If you cannot, wear ear protection (earplugs or earmuffs).
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider for removal of earwax.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have pain in or drainage from your ear or you develop dizziness, headaches, or fever.
- ⊗ **DON'T** put anything, such as cotton-tipped swabs, in your ears.
- ⊗ **DON'T** ignore worsening loss of hearing.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- National Hearing Aid Helpline
Tel: (800) 521-5247
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders
Tel: (800) 241-1044
Website: <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing>