

Important Reasons to Address your Hearing Loss

One of the biggest myths about hearing loss is that it isn't something to be concerned about. Many people think it's simply something to live with and something that doesn't have any impact outside of their own hearing ability.

In truth, it is a largely treatable condition. It also has a number of major side effects, including serious effects on mental health. Ignoring your declining hearing could lead to serious problems for you and your loved ones.

Depression

One of the most serious side effects of hearing loss is an increased risk of depression. One study by the National Council on the Aging (NCOA) found, among many other side effects, "significantly more of the seniors with untreated hearing loss reported feelings of sadness or depression that lasted two or more weeks during the previous years."

Nobody knows the exact way hearing loss is linked to depression, but there are several possibilities:

- Hearing loss isolates you from others, making communication and interaction more difficult.
- Hearing loss takes away or lessens enjoyment of familiar activities and hobbies such as watching TV or movies, talking with friends, and outdoor activities.
- Hearing loss can reduce people's self-confidence, making them feel less adequate and leading to depressed feelings.

Irritability

Along with depression, hearing loss can also cause other mood changes. The most common is irritability or frustration.

According to the same NCOA study above, nearly a quarter of people with untreated hearing loss were likely to agree with the statement, "People get angry with me usually for no reason." However, there often is a reason - other people get



frustrated when someone repeatedly can't hear them. In addition, people with hearing loss often get frustrated themselves when they can't hear what's going on around them.

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Loss of Balance

One of the largest causes of injuries to the elderly is slips and falls. As you age, your bones become less dense and more brittle. Even a slight fall could be enough to cause serious injury. What does this have to do with hearing loss? Damage to the inner ear could affect both your hearing and also your balance, making falls more likely.

Hearing loss coupled with balance problems could indicate very serious issues in your ears. If you notice these symptoms in yourself, you should visit an audiologist or otologist right away.

Memory Problems & Dementia

Another way hearing loss can affect the brain is through memory. New research suggests hearing loss could have a negative effect on the brain's ability to form new memories or recall information, and could even lead to a higher incidence of dementia.

Other studies have linked severe hearing loss to increased cognitive decline and a higher risk for dementia. The exact link between hearing loss and dementia isn't well understood. That said, individuals who treat their hearing loss are much less likely to be at risk than those who don't.

Many of the negative effects of hearing loss are related to the isolation and frustration it causes. With hearing aids, you can restore your hearing ability and go back to enjoying your life the way you did before your hearing loss.