

Understanding Age-Related Hearing Loss

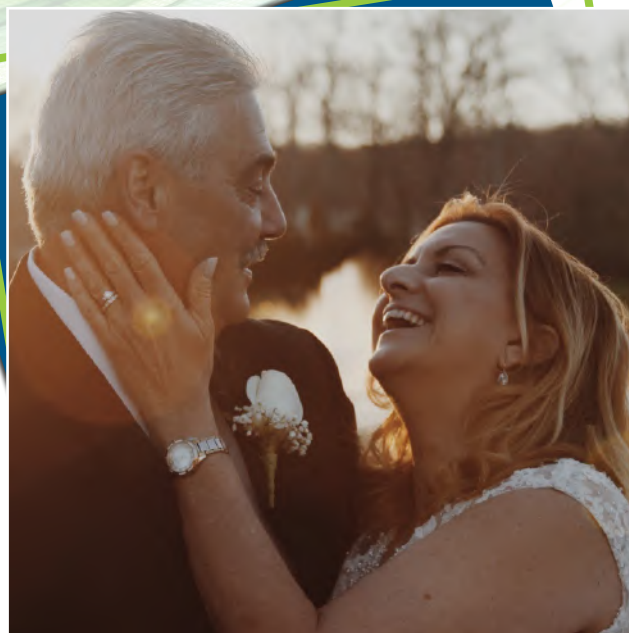
For many patients, the cause of their hearing loss is easy to determine - too much exposure to prolonged loud noise, damage to their ears from infections, or a simple earwax blockage. However, many elderly patients begin to experience hearing loss without any single cause. This "age-related hearing loss" affects millions of Americans, and it can be difficult to detect and treat without the help of a qualified audiologist.

What is Age-Related Hearing Loss

Age-related hearing loss is also known as presbycusis. It doesn't have any single cause, but instead seems to result from a number of different causes and risk factors. Almost all people experience some degree of hearing loss as they age, but only some people have hearing loss serious enough to warrant treatment.

Some of the factors associated with age-related hearing loss include:

- **Exposure to Loud Noises:** If you worked in a loud environment or regularly participated in loud activities (such as attending concerts or firing guns) you are more likely to experience age-related hearing loss.
- **Family History:** Hearing loss tends to run in families. If your parents or grandparents had hearing loss as they aged, you're more likely to have it yourself.
- **A History of Smoking:** Smokers are more likely to experience hearing loss than non-smokers. The exact reason why is unknown, though researchers speculate cigarette smoke may cause cardiovascular changes that affect your hearing.
- **Certain Diseases:** A number of different diseases and conditions can affect your hearing, including meningitis, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders in your inner ear.
- **Ototoxic Medication:** Several drugs and medications have hearing-related side effects. These include the antibiotic gentamicin, some loop diuretics, and the chemotherapy drug cisplatin. Some NSAID medications are also ototoxic in high doses.





While any of these factors can cause hearing loss on their own, it's more common for them to affect the hearing of older individuals. This is because the effects of hearing loss are cumulative - small amounts of hearing damage from loud noise or from disease can add up over time, creating larger problems in older individuals than they would on their own in a younger person.

How Do I Know if I Have Age-Related Hearing Loss?

It can be difficult to tell if your hearing is fading due to the gradual nature of most age-related hearing loss. However, several symptoms can point to hearing loss in older patients. If you find yourself experiencing any of the following symptoms, you should make an appointment with a licensed audiologist to get your hearing tested.

- Difficulty hearing or understanding people talking around you, especially in noisy or busy environments;
- Needing to ask others to repeat themselves often;
- Certain sounds seeming too loud or too quiet to you, but not to others;
- Having problems telling sounds or noises apart or frequently "mis-hearing" words or sounds around you;
- Often talking too loudly or too quietly for your surroundings;
- Frequent ringing in your ears or other persistent noises.

If you do notice these symptoms in yourself or a loved one, they could be a sign of untreated age-related hearing loss.

How Do You Treat Age-Related Hearing Loss?

There is no single treatment for age-related hearing loss. Unfortunately no treatments exist that can naturally amplify your ear's ability to hear. However, there are several devices and tools you can use to amplify sounds around you, making it easier for your ears to pick up on them.

Hearing aids are the most common treatment for age-related hearing loss, and they help improve hearing ability in the vast majority of individuals. However, only a licensed audiologist can help you find the proper hearing aid or other assistive device to suit your needs and your lifestyle.

To find out if you have age-related hearing loss, contact Audio Recovery today. Our Oklahoma City audiology clinic has helped thousands of Oklahomans hear better and live fuller lives. To schedule an appointment, call us today at **(405) 949-1906**. You can also visit us on Facebook to get more information about hearing loss and audiology.

