

Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids

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Hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults. Among the elderly, hearing loss is the third most serious health issue, behind arthritis and hypertension. Eighty percent of adult's with hearing complaints can be helped with hearing aids.

Determining the type and cause of a hearing loss begins with a visit to an audiologist. The testing completed by an audiologist will determine the type, degree, configuration and symmetry of hearing loss. When the hearing loss is medically treatable the audiologist will refer the individual to their physician for medical treatment. In other cases, the audiologist will discuss options in appropriate hearing instruments.

Symptoms of Hearing Loss

- Complaining that others are mumbling is typical.
- Hearing well in quiet settings but having difficulty understanding conversations in groups or public gatherings.
- Frequently asking others to repeat themselves.
- Turning up the television to a level that disturbs others
- Avoiding social situations that were once enjoyed because the noise levels make it difficult to understand conversations.

Ensuring Hearing Aid Satisfaction

- Recognize your hearing loss is making communication difficult. Know that help is available. Hearing aid studies have shown that people who have a positive attitude do better with hearing aids.
- Identify communication settings that are difficult for you. Relate those settings to your audiologist. If your audiologist understands your communication needs, they can better address your problems in choosing the best hearing aid for you, programming the hearing aid and helping you to develop strategies to manage your difficult situations. Work with your audiologist to find the best hearing aids for your hearing loss, your lifestyle and your communication needs. Your neighbor or friend's choice in hearing aids may not be your best choice. No two people are alike.
- Be realistic. Hearing loss typically develops over many years. Becoming re-acquainted with sounds while using hearing aids will take practice and time. It is important not to become disillusioned or frustrated while your brain adjusts to the sounds provided by your hearing aids.
- Be patient with yourself and your new hearing aids. Your audiologist is your advocate. Continue to ask questions to maximize the use of your hearing aids.

| For more information on hearing loss or determining if your hearing aid is appropriate for your needs contact Dr. Mary Maddock Au.D. Dr. Maddock has 23 years experience as a clinical audiologist. She recently earned her fourth Award for Continuing Education from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. She is Board Certified by the American Board of Audiology.