



Hearing Loss in Adults

Hearing is one of our most important senses. It helps us to communicate, to be warned about danger, and to be aware of the world around us.

At least 1 out of every 10 adults has a hearing loss. About 60 to 75 per cent of persons over 65 years of age have hearing problems.

What are the signs that you may have a hearing loss?

- You often ask people to repeat or speak louder.
- You have difficulty understanding or following conversations in quiet or noisy places.
- You have to concentrate to understand what people say.

What are the different types of hearing loss?

The two types of hearing loss are conductive and sensorineural. A person can have a hearing loss that is part conductive and part sensorineural.

Conductive Hearing Loss

A problem in the outer or middle part of the ear may cause a conductive hearing loss. This can often be treated medically.

Sensorineural Hearing Loss

A problem with the inner part of the ear or nerve may cause a sensorineural hearing loss.

Sensorineural hearing loss can be caused by very loud noise, disease, injury, certain medicines, and aging. Sensorineural hearing loss is permanent, and it can not be treated medically.

With sensorineural hearing loss, sound may seem either too soft or too loud. Speech may also seem muffled or unclear and difficult to understand. Ringing, hissing, or clicking noises in your ear are not unusual when you have a sensorineural hearing loss.

What should I do if I think I have a hearing loss?

If you think you have a hearing loss, you should make an appointment with your doctor who may refer you to one of the following professionals:

- **Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Doctor** – An ENT Doctor is a medical specialist in diseases of the ear, nose, throat, and related concerns.
- **Audiologist** – An Audiologist tests hearing and diagnoses hearing loss. Audiologists also prescribe, dispense and fit hearing aids, and offer hearing rehabilitation and counseling.
- **Hearing Instrument Practitioner** – A Hearing Instrument Practitioner tests hearing, prescribes, dispenses and fits hearing aids.

You can also make an appointment directly with an Audiologist or a Hearing Instrument Practitioner.

Will a hearing aid help?

Hearing aids do not cure hearing loss. A hearing aid is a battery-powered amplifier that makes sound louder. This can help you hear better in many situations.

There are many different makes, models, styles and prices of hearing aids. Some fit behind the ear, some are worn at the opening of the ear, and some go completely into the ear canal.

One aid may work better for you than another. It is important that you speak with an Audiologist or Hearing Instrument Practitioner about the best hearing aid for your needs.

Some people have special needs that may require additional devices. You should discuss your needs with a hearing health professional.

Do I have to pay for a hearing aid?

Hearing aids are not covered under the Medical Services Plan. There are a number of funding options including individual Extended Health Benefit plans, WorkSafeBC, and Veterans' Affairs Canada. Individuals with low incomes or on disability benefits may qualify for financial aid through a government assistance program. Your Audiologist or Hearing Instrument Practitioner can advise you of possible funding options.

For more information

For more information, contact the College of Speech and Hearing Health Professionals of BC for a list of Audiologists and Hearing Instrument Practitioners in your area, or visit the BC Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists at www.bcaslpa.ca.

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.