



Hearing Health: What Everyone Should Know About Hearing, Hearing Aids, & Healthy Aging





About WIHA

- **Mission:** To improve the health and well-being of all people as we age by disseminating evidence-based programs and practices and by engaging in collaborative public health strategies in Wisconsin and beyond.
- <https://wihealthyaging.org>
- **Age Well Newsletter**



Sponsor Welcome



Introduction to Speakers

- Presenters:
 - Juliëtte Sterkens, AuD
 - Wynne Whyman, MA, MSS

Center for
Hearing Access
— at The Shedd Institute





Photo: Dorchester Senior Center, flickr

What Everyone Should Know About Hearing, Hearing Aids, & Healthy Aging

August 25, 2026

Dr. Juliëtte Sterkens, audiologist
Wynne Whyman, MA, MSS
Center for Hearing Access

Speaker Introduction-Center for Hearing Access

Dr. Juliëtte Sterkens

Hearing Access Advocate



Wynne Whyman

Director of Communication and Advocacy



About the Center for Hearing Access

Center for
Hearing Access
— at The Shedd Institute

- **Overview:** National nonprofit initiative founded in 2024, based in Eugene, Oregon. Presence in Colorado and Wisconsin
- **Website:** 150+ webpages, 150+ handouts, 2400+ online library, 1000+ hyperlinks
- **Audience:** Facility staff, consumers, audiologists, and hearing instrument specialists
- **Topics:** All ADA-compliant assistive listening systems and other strategies to increase hearing access.
- **Work:** Advocacy materials, ADA information, a speaker's bureau, videos, templates for users and staff, articles, and vendor lists

Many materials today are from CHA or can be found on the website

Email: info@chaShedd.org

Website: www.CenterForHearingAccess.org

Disclaimer

- Information should not be construed as legal or medical advice.
- Products and equipment used for illustration are not product endorsements. Exclusion shouldn't be construed as disapproval.
- We don't have any financial interest in any product.
- Disclosures:
Wynne Whyman and audiologist, Dr. Juliëtte Sterkens
work with the national nonprofit, the Center for Hearing Access

Today

Our hopes

1. Learn more about the effects of hearing loss
2. Options to hear better with and without technologies

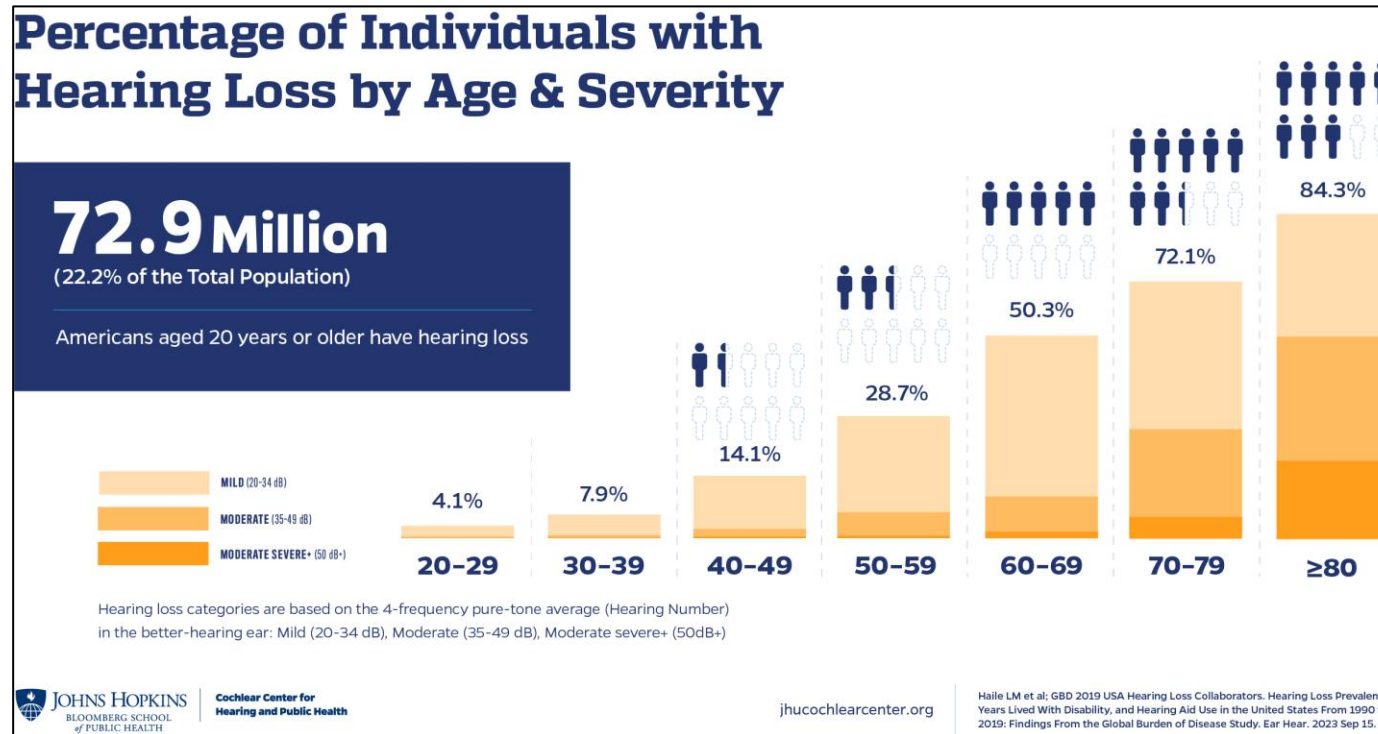
Outline

- About hearing loss
- Hearing aids
- Technologies beyond hearing aids
- Self-advocacy



About Hearing Loss

Hearing Loss Affects 1 in 5 (Average) & Increases With Age



- Over 98% in the US use spoken language [hearing loss]
- <1% use sign language [deaf/Deaf]
- <1% use some form of tactile communication [DeafBlind]

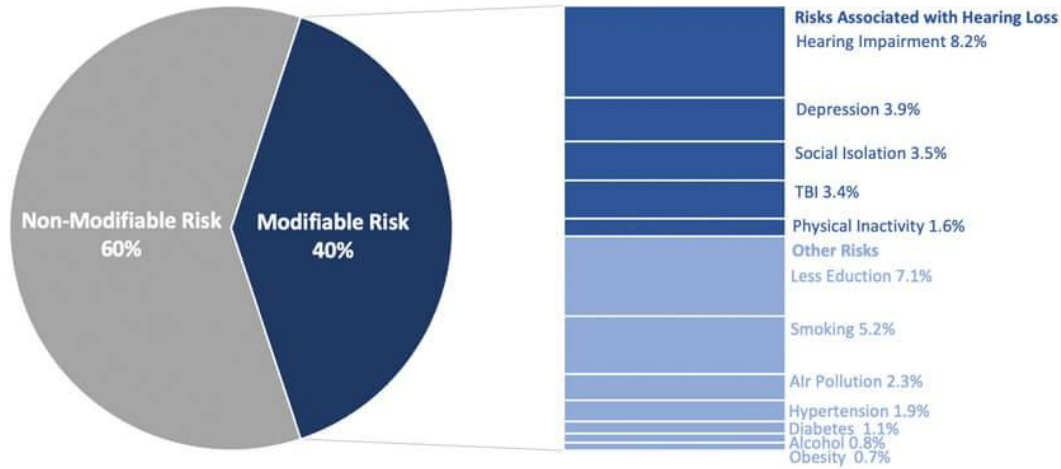
<https://www.jhucochlearcenter.org/infographic-hearing-loss-prevalence-us>

Hearing Loss, When *Untreated*, Can Contribute To:



- Feeling tired
- Irritability and anger (ask any spouse...)
- Depression
- Social isolation
- Reduced quality of life (QoL)
- **Not remembering well**
- **Increased risk of falls, accidents**
- **Earlier onset of dementia**

Hearing Loss Risks



Modifiable dementia risk factors associated with hearing impairment

Image retrieved on 08/23/2026:

www.entandaudiologynews.com/features/audiology-features/post/2020-lancet-commission-on-dementia-a-call-to-action-for-integrated-hearing-healthcare

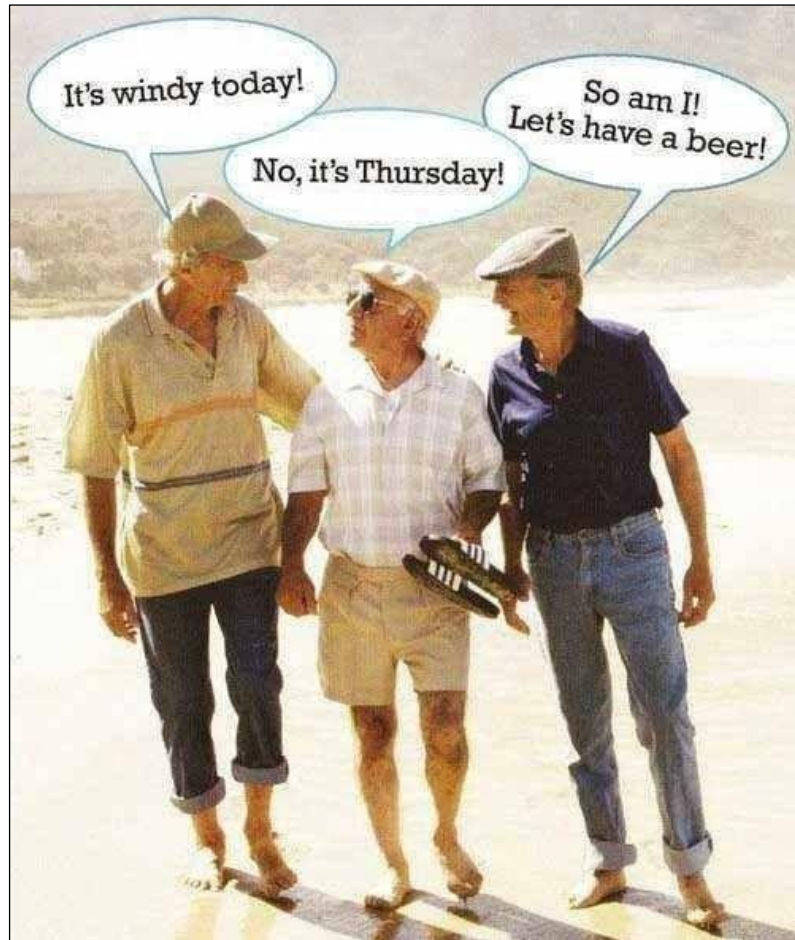
- **The Lancet Commission's** 2020 report¹, updated in 2024, identified hearing loss as the single largest modifiable risk factor for dementia, out of 12 to 14 known factors, ahead of hypertension, smoking, and everything else on the list.
- The ACHIEVE study², a randomized controlled trial, found that **treating hearing loss measurably slowed cognitive decline in the group of older adults at increased risk for cognitive decline.** They concluded hearing intervention can slow down loss of thinking and memory abilities.
- Even **mild hearing loss triples the risk of a fall.**³ Suggesting that early identification of hearing loss may aid in developing preventive strategies to reduce the incidence of falls.

1. [www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736\(20\)30367-6/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(20)30367-6/fulltext)

2. <https://www.achievestudy.org/> (Aging and Cognitive Health Evaluation In Elders)

3. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11926736/> published in JAMA Otolaryngol Head Neck Surgery

Hearing Loss Often Looks Like Misunderstanding



Man #1 "It's windy today!"

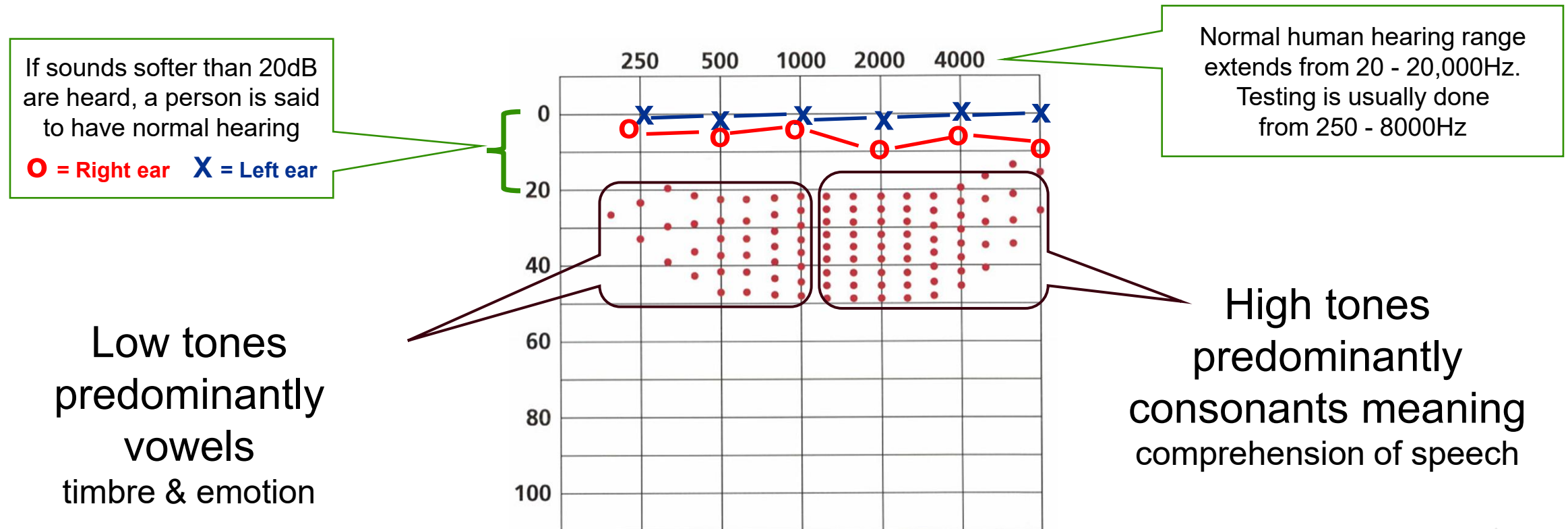
Man #2 "No it's Thursday!"

Man #3 "So am I! Let's have a beer"

Hearing is recorded in an AUDIOGRAM

The more dots (audible speech sounds) above hearing threshold, the more speech energy is perceived. But some “dots” are more important than the others.

This area of dots is sometimes referred to as the “speech banana”



Some Speech Sounds Are More Critical Than Others

- Vowels (lower tones) carry 80% of speech intensity
- Consonants (higher tones) carry 80% of intelligibility

Th. P.ck.rs d.d *n.t* pl.y .n th. S.p.rb.wl

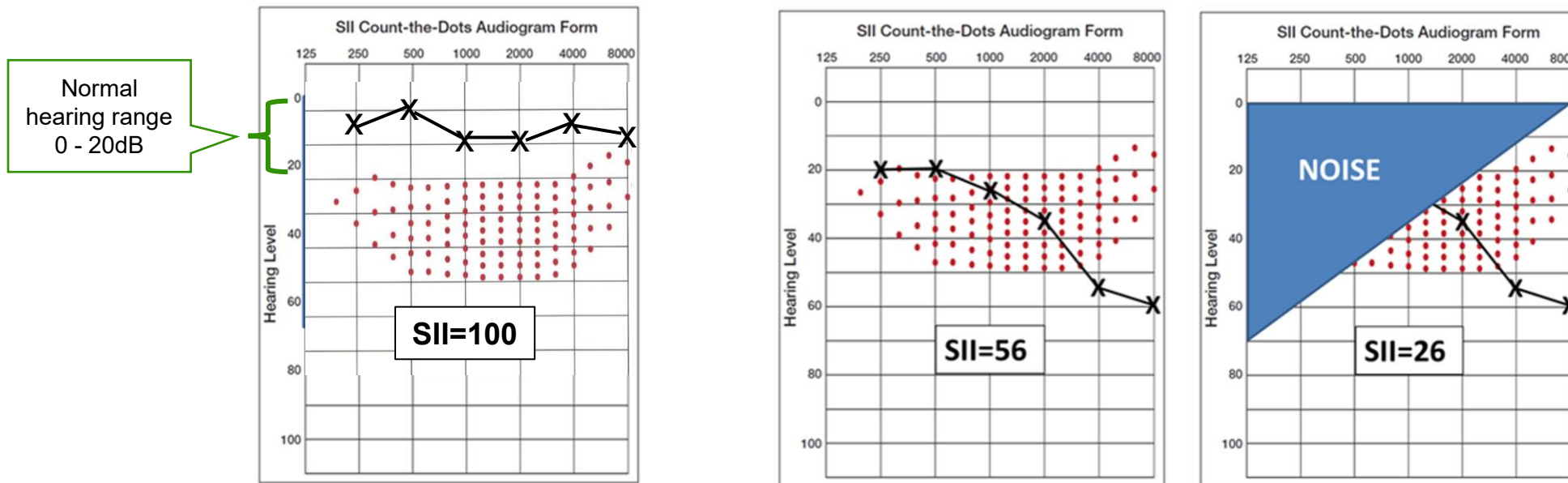
l .o.e .o ..o. .u.i.. i. .y .a..e.

High pitch hearing loss leads to a very typical complaint:
“I can hear but I can’t understand!”

Difficulties Understanding Speech In Noise

What happens when a person with typical hearing, hears in background noise?

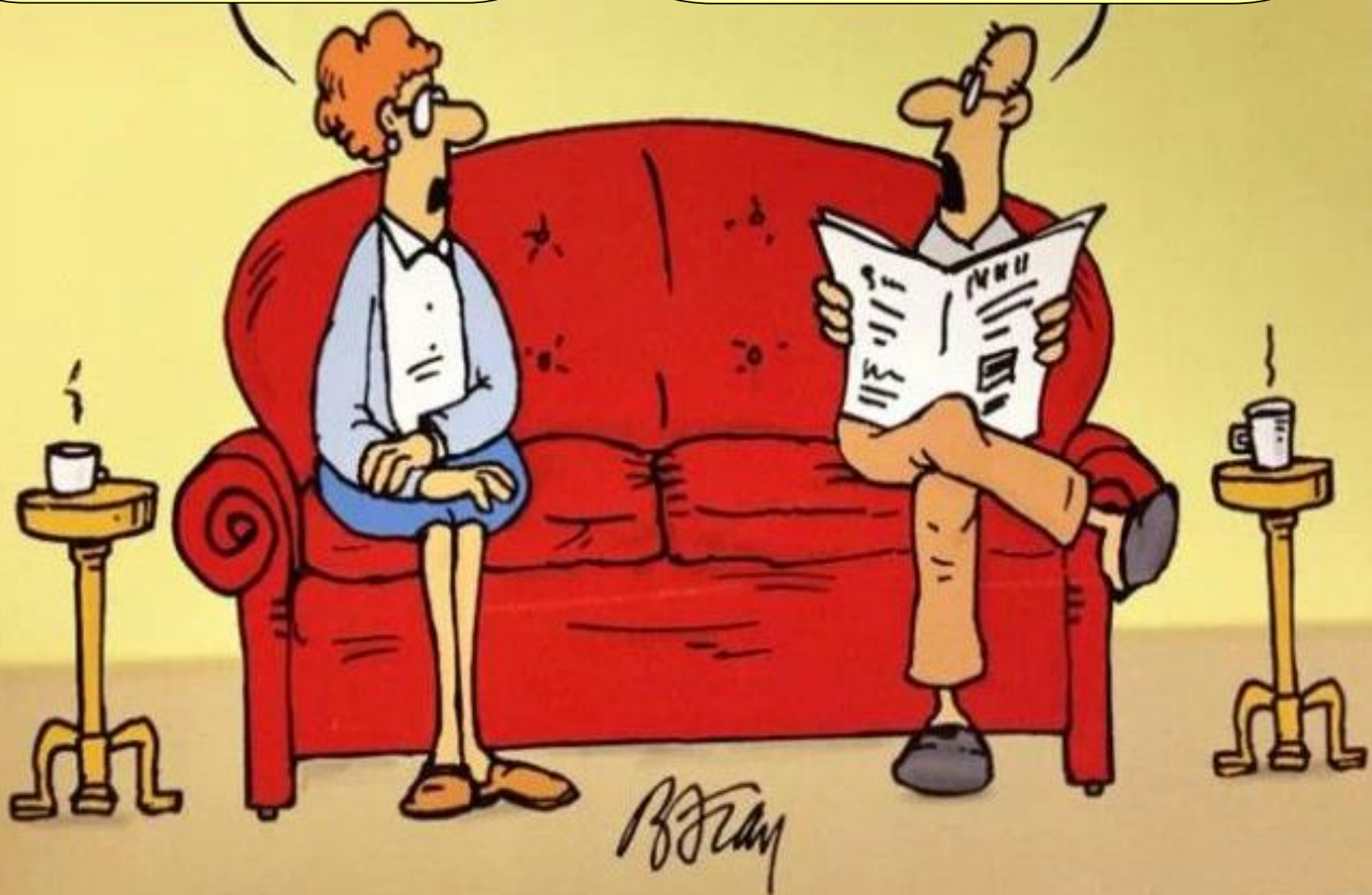
What happens when a person with hearing loss is communicating in that same amount of noise?



SII refers to the **S**peech **I**ntelligibility **I**ndex
Each red dot equals 1% speech understanding

I THINK YOU NEED A
HEARING TEST

WHY THE HECK DO I NEED
A HAIRY CHEST?



One Way To Determine Your Needs At Home

Quick Hearing Check



Introduction

The following hearing loss test is based on the Revised American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) five-minute hearing check.* It is a means of quickly assessing if you possibly have a hearing loss requiring referral for an objective hearing test and possible hearing solution. This test is related to objective measures of hearing loss using audiological equipment. In step #1 you are asked to respond to 15 items related to your hearing. In step #2 you will score your hearing and in step #3 (next page) you will be able to compare yourself to 2,304 adults with hearing loss.

Instructions

With respect to your hearing please think about your experiences with each of the following WITHOUT the use of hearing aids or other devices designed to help you hear better. For each item, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree (circle one number for each item).

Step1

	STRONGLY DISAGREE ←					STRONGLY → AGREE
	0	1	2	3	4	
I have a problem hearing over the telephone						
I have trouble following the conversation when two or more people are talking at the same time						
I have trouble understanding things on TV						
I have to strain to understand conversations						
I have to worry about missing a telephone ring or doorbell						
I have trouble hearing conversations in a noisy background such as a crowded room or restaurant						
I get confused about where sounds come from						
I misunderstand some words in a sentence and need to ask people to repeat themselves						
I especially have trouble understanding the speech of women and children ...						
I have trouble understanding the speaker in a large room such as at a meeting or place of worship						
Many people I talk to seem to mumble (or don't speak clearly)						
People get annoyed because I misunderstand what they say						
I misunderstand what others are saying and make inappropriate responses ...						
I avoid social activities because I cannot hear well and fear I will reply improperly						
Family members and friends have told me they think I may have a hearing loss						

Instructions

Add up scores in each column scored 1-4

Continued on reverse side ...

Step2

— + — + — + = —

The paper & pencil Quick Hearing Check 2 pages

Other options:
www.hearingtracker.com/resources/best-online-hearing-tests

www.CenterForHearingAccess.org/Winchester

<https://hearingreview.com/practice-building/practice-management/the-validity-and-reliability-of-the-bhi-quick-hearing-check>

How to Take the Paper and Pencil Test

1. Take the Paper-and-Pencil test

2. Ask someone who knows you *well*, to also take the *same* test rating *your* ability to hear

3. Compare scores

4. Review/discuss large differences

5. A score **over 20** merits an audiological evaluation

Back page
paper & pencil
Quick Hearing Check

Instructions

Step 3

How Does Your Hearing Loss Score Compare to Adults with Hearing loss?

In adding up your responses to the 15 items you are now able to compare your scores to adults who have a hearing loss. The National Council on the Aging (NCOA) collected this information based on the responses from a representative sample of 2,304 people with hearing loss, ages 50 and above, using the National Family Opinion Panel in 1999.

First, locate your total score in column 1; Column 2 tells you how your hearing loss compares to adults with hearing loss; Column 3 tells how your significant other views the hearing loss; Column 4 tells you what hearing solution action is needed.

1 What is your hearing loss score?	2 How does your hearing loss compare to others?	3 How does your significant other describe your hearing loss?	4 Hearing Solution Action Needed
0-4	Lower 5%	Very Mild	None
5-9	Lower 10%	v	v
10-13	Lower 15%	Majority mild with some moderate	Hearing test may be necessary to monitor your hearing.
14-17	Lower 20%		
18-19	Lower 25%	v	v
20-21	Lower 30%	Majority moderate with about a third mild	Hearing test recommended; hearing solution based on lifestyle
22-23	Lower 35%		v
24-25	Lower 40%	v	Hearing test recommended; hearing solution probably needed in many situations.
26-27	Lower 45%	Majority moderate with some mild	
28-29	Middle 50%		
30-31	Upper 45%	v	v
32-33	Upper 40%	Majority moderate to severe	Extensive communication difficulty requiring testing and hearing solution.
34-35	Upper 35%		
36-37	Upper 30%		
38-39	Upper 25%		
40-42	Upper 20%	v	
43-45	Upper 15%	Majority severe to profound	
46-50	Upper 10%		
51-55	Upper 5%		
56-60	Upper 1%	v	v

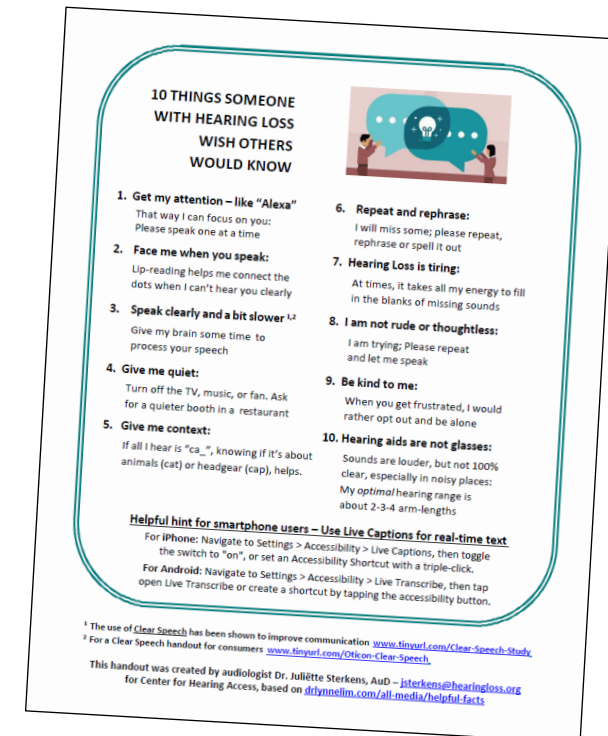
*Source: Koike, J.; Hurst, M.K.; and Wetmore, S. J. Correlation between the American Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery five-minute hearing test and standard audiological data. *Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery*, Volume 111 (5), pp. 625-632.

Hearing Instruments

- Communication strategies
- Hearing aids (OTC and prescription)
- Cochlear implants

10 Things Someone With Hearing Loss Wish Others Would Know

1. Get my attention
2. Face me when you speak
3. Speak clearly and a bit slower
4. Give me quiet
5. Give me context
6. Repeat and rephrase
7. Hearing loss is tiring
8. I am not rude or thoughtless
9. Be kind to me
10. Hearing aids are not glasses and do not correct hearing



OTC Hearing Aids



- Do product research: reviews, warranty, features, etc.
- **Most OTC hearing aids do not have Bluetooth or telecoils** that permit you to hear TV or your smartphone directly in your ears or allow you to connect to assistive listening systems.

Resources

- OTC hearing aids: [What Do Consumers Need To Know?](#) Manchaiah et al. (webpage)
- [HLAA Tips](#) (1 page, pdf) (**H**earing **L**oss **A**ssociation of **A**merica)
- Consumer Reports- [Best OTC](#) (membership)
- [What to Know](#) About Over-the-Counter (OTC) Hearing Aids
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
- Pilot program would offer over-the-counter hearing aids to veterans with hearing loss
[Stars and Stripes](#) February 2, 2026

Research

- Jilla AM, Jorgensen L. [Hearing Aid Adoption in the OTC Hearing Aid Era](#): Market Trends and Consumer Insights from MarkeTrak 2025. Semin Hear. 2025 Oct 9;46(3):184-195. doi: 10.1055/s-0045-1812040. PMID: 41278543; PMCID: PMC12638189.



Many Consumers Need The Help & Expertise Of An Audiologist



Nashlea Brogan, Au.D.
@nashleabrogan.aud

The most important choice you will make is not what hearing device you wear, the model, or features.

It is who you trust to provide a lifetime of hearing health care.

Choose wisely!

Choose A Hearing Care Provider

- Choose type of practice (independent, ENT office, big box, manufacturer network, university, nonprofit, [Hearing up network](#), VA)
- Patient-focused
- Look for long-term service (not buying a product)
- Follows Best Practices
 - Speech in noise testing
 - Real Ear Measurement (REM) [second fitting]
- Is the provider a proponent of assistive listening devices?
Are handouts provided?
- Does the provider offer aural rehab classes or refer you to a support group?



Prescription Hearing Aids (Wisconsin Hearing Aid Buying Guide)

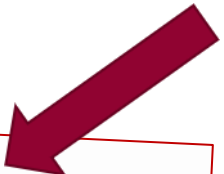
Read page 2: “What the hearing care provider should review with you”

- Questions about your hearing **history**
- Extensive testing **including speech-in-noise** & loudness discomfort tests
- **Extensive counseling** (you/family or friend) on the results, and clearly spelled out recommendations
- Ideally, the provider creates a **list of goals** to help you with hearing aids and/or some other plan of action

Our Advice:

Bring your **paper and pencil** hearing test results, a list of questions, and a “second set of ears” to appointments.)

www.CenterForHearingAccess.org/Winchester



What the hearing care provider should review with you:

- Review your audiogram results.
- Explain why you can hear but not always understand.
- Talk about your lifestyle and how hearing loss affects it.
- Discuss whether you are a hearing-aid candidate and what to expect in key listening situations that are important to you.
- Encouragement to bring a significant other to this part of the consult.

HEARING AID SELECTION

Based on your test results, lifestyle, preferences, and budget, your provider will recommend hearing aids that best fit your needs and help you set hearing-aid goals.

Types of hearing aids: Styles include behind-the-ear, in-the-ear, open-fit, completely-in-canal, and extended-wear—each offering distinct options and benefits. Your test results and personal preferences guide the selection of hearing aids. Some features vary by style, so that trade-offs may apply. Some providers also sell or may recommend trying over-the-counter devices first.

Features may include

- **Directional microphones** that focus on sounds in front of you.
- **Telecoils** that connect wirelessly to hearing loops and other assistive technologies (via neckloop) and enhance hearing in many settings.
- **Auracast Bluetooth**, a new technology that can connect hearing aids wirelessly to phones, TVs, clip-on mics, and soon to Auracast Broadcast Assistive Listening Systems.
- **Remote controls or smartphone apps** that allow easy adjustments.
- **Special programs** that enhance listening in cars, with music, and in group settings.
- **Rechargeable or disposable batteries.**
- **Manual or automatic volume and program controls.**

HEARING AID DISPENSING

Fitting: When the new hearing aids are delivered, your provider should show you how to:

- Place them correctly in and your ears.
- Access customized programs for your lifestyle.
- Use the telecoil feature in real-life situations.
- Install or charge batteries.
- Clean, store, and care for your hearing aids.

Choosing Hearing Aids

WI Buying Hearing Aids guide, Page 2: “Hearing Aid Selection”



You & your provider need to decide

- **Style/size: “in” versus “over the ear” style**
Driven by degree of loss, anatomy of your ear, your budget, dexterity and to (some extent) your preferences and/or your insurance

Built-in features (driven by your needs)

- Strongly recommended to have *both* (to connect to audio in public places):
 - Telecoil** (as recommended by CHA, CR, AARP, Forbes Health, HLAA)
 - Auracast**
- Other features
 - Directional microphone
 - Digital noise suppression
 - Rechargeable or disposable batteries
 - Special features such as smartphone apps, remote control, remote microphone, or a TV transmitter

Use Independent Reviews

- Consumer Reports [Hearing Aids](#) (general info webpage)
- Consumer Reports [Buying Guide](#)
- Consumer Reports Article: [Make your Hearing Aids work harder](#)
- [Hearing Tracker](#)

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- Place them correctly in and on your ears.
- Access customized programs for your lifestyle.
- Use the telecoil feature in real-life situations.
- Install or charge batteries.
- Clean, store, and care for your hearing aids.

Some Questions To Ask When Buying Hearing Aids

- What is the typical trial period (30, 60 or 90 days?) – what portion is not refundable?
- Are the hearing aids “open” or “locked”? Can *any* audiologist adjust them?
- Is it possible to compare different makes or levels of technology?¹

**You are entering into a long-term relationship with a provider.
It is important he/she instills trust in you.**

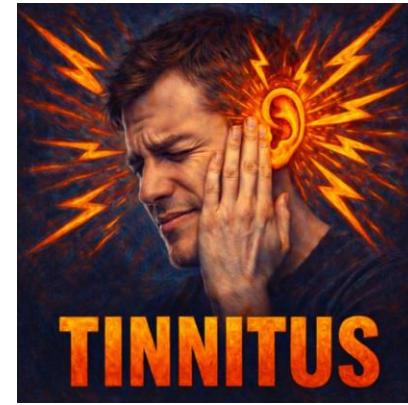
¹ A double-blind study at U of Memphis showed that, for some users, more advanced hearing aids did *not* result in improved outcomes www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4224118/

What Can Most Users Expect From Well-Adjusted and Verified Hearing Aids?

- ✓ Much better hearing in one-on-one situations, at “normal conversational distance” (but...not “normal” hearing; hearing aids correct at best +/- 50% of hearing loss levels)
- ✓ Work optimally in “quieter” places
- ✓ Work “OK” in small groups – *if* there’s no/little cross talk
- ✓ Many users benefit from personal assistive technology, such as a TV streamer and Remote Mic
- ✓ Many users need **Assistive Listening Technology** in public places such as theaters, meeting rooms and places of worship



Tinnitus



- **Tinnitus:** the perception of noise or ringing in ears without an external sound source. It can manifest as **ringing, buzzing, hissing, or clicking sounds.**
- Common tinnitus **causes** include exposure to loud noises, ear infections, (age-related) hearing loss, earwax buildup, and certain medications.
- Tinnitus **can affect** concentration, sleep, and overall quality of life and may lead to anxiety or depression in some individuals.
- **Is treatable;** including counseling, sound therapy, and hearing aids.
<https://www.froedtert.com/tinnitus> (for information and free videos)
- **Seek help** from an ENT and/or audiologist if you experience persistent (one-sided) tinnitus, particularly if accompanied by (fluctuating) hearing loss, or dizziness.

Technologies Beyond Hearing Aids

Overview

- Cochlear Implants
- TV
- When on the go
- Theaters, government meetings, lectures

What If Hearing Aids Minimally Help You Hear In Your Daily Life?

- You turn up the TV volume – even with hearing aids
- You rely more and more on lip-reading & TV captions
- It seems like you are missing conversations (and may withdraw)



Consider being evaluated for a cochlear implant

Medicare Expansion of CI Candidacy Is 'Life-Changing' for Older Patients

By Laura Odato

December 3, 2022



Image retrieved on 11-18-2025
<https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/2022-1207-medicare-ci-candidacy/full/>

Cochlear Implant Candidacy: The "60-60" Guideline

You are considered a candidate for a cochlear implant evaluation if:

- **Pure-tone average (PTA)** of 60 dB or greater in the better ear: This indicates a severe to profound hearing loss.
- **Unaided word recognition** score of 60% or less in the better ear: This means that the individual has difficulty understanding speech without a hearing aid.
- Key points
 - Medicare covers cochlear implants (unlike prescription hearing aids)
 - Rehabilitation and training are required in order to achieve the best possible hearing ability (Johns Hopkins)
- Resource: [American Cochlear Implant Alliance](https://americancochlear.org/), Adults

"speech banana"

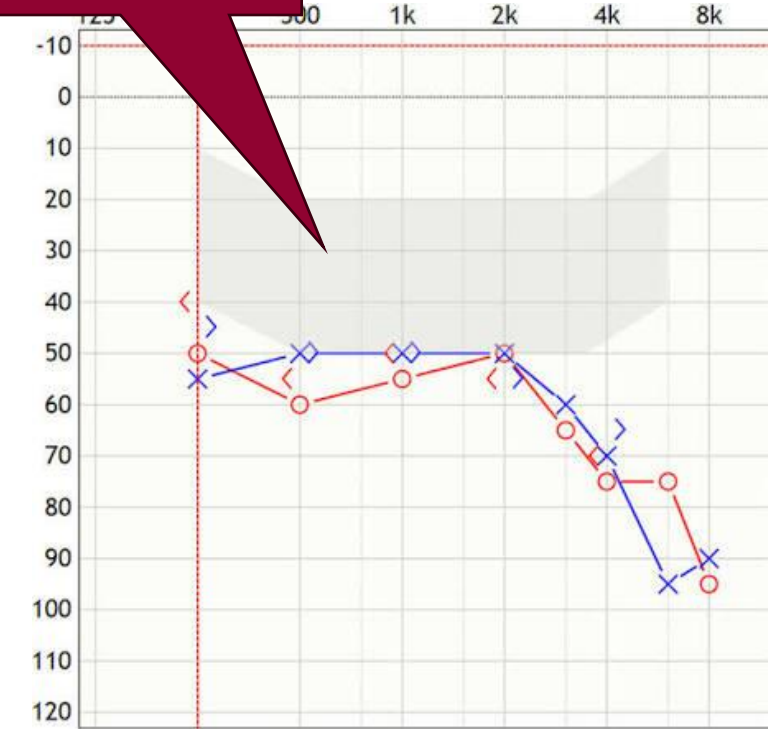


Illustration of an audiogram, but not the criteria for a cochlear implant.

Graphic credit:

<https://pubs.rsna.org/doi/full/10.1148/rg.240018>

Captioning

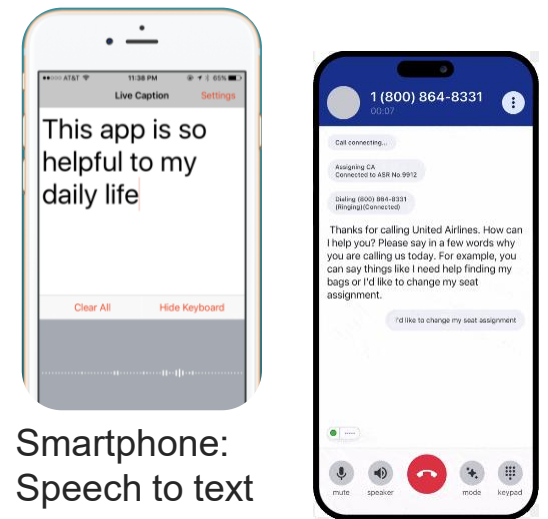
- Turn on the captions on TV and other devices
- Use a captioning smartphone app, “speech-to-text”
- Use a captioned phone (no cost) or phone app
- Request captions at meetings (no cost)
- Attend movies with captions: closed captions (with borrowed devices) or open captions (shown on the screen)



Captioned telephone (image credit: [Hearing Review](#))

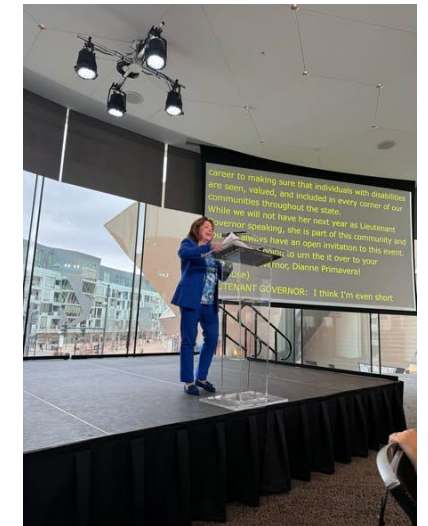


Open captions at a movie theater



Smartphone:
Speech to text

Image credit:
www.innocaption.com



Captions during a meeting or presentation

TV Solutions Can Be Life Changing

TV transmitter options:

- 1) Device compatible with hearing aids (ask provider)
- 2) Separate device (with or without hearing aids)
- 3) Built into the TV (Auracast is just emerging)



Image used with permission from Widex A/S

Microphones for Restaurants, Healthcare Appointments, and Personal Use

With hearing aids

Clip-on
Microphone



Table Microphone



Image used with permission from Widex A/S

Without hearing aids



Photo credit: Bellman & Symfon

Personal
Amplifier



Resources

- [Personal amplification devices](#)
- [Remote microphones](#)

Hear the Difference Assistive Listening Makes



CLARITY

Hearing Loop Demo Oshkosh Convention Center
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcfqmVb-DmU>

Resource: [More videos are available](#) (each 1-minute, on website)

Imagine If You Could Listen to the Loudspeaker Audio Directly...



Photo credit: <https://contactmcr.com/news/contact-becomes-the-first-theatre-in-england-to-introduce-auracast>

All Assistive Listening Systems

- Use borrowed headphones and receivers (or a variation)
- Provided by the facility at NO COST



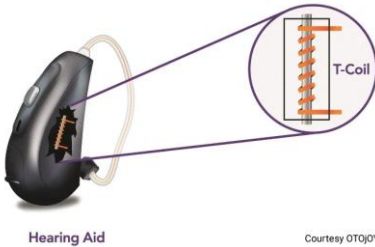
Using Assistive Listening Systems (All you need to know)



Option #1 Direct Audio

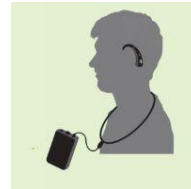
- Hearing instruments **WITH** a telecoil

A. Hearing loop



B. FM/RF, infrared, Auracast broadcast Assistive Listening

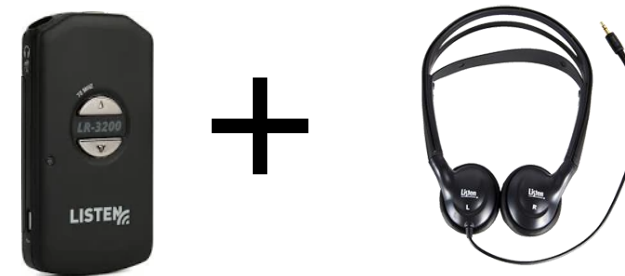
Borrow a receiver and neckloop from the facility



Option #2

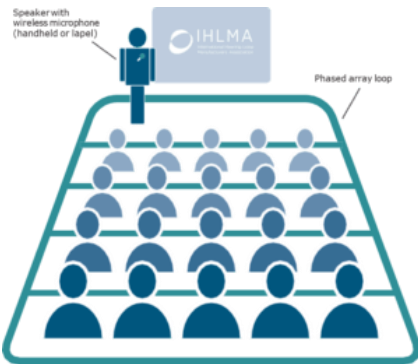
- **WITHOUT** hearing instruments
- Hearing instruments **WITHOUT** a telecoil

Borrow a hearing loop receiver and headphones from the facility



Types of Assistive Listening System Technologies

Hearing Loop (Induction Loop)



Graphic credit: IHLMA/IAHA

FM/RF (Frequency Modulation/ Radio Frequency)



Auracast broadcast ALS (emerging)



Graphic credit: WilliamsAV Infinium

Other Systems (not recommended for common places):

- IR (Infrared) [Courtrooms and some theaters]
- Audio Over Wi-Fi [delay/latency concerns]
- Direct Wired Equipment [very uncommon]

Where Assistive Listening Systems are Required (where there is a sound system)

- amphitheaters
 - arenas
 - auditoria
 - classrooms
 - concert halls
 - convention centers
 - courtrooms
 - dinner theaters
 - grandstands
 - lecture halls
 - legislative chambers
 - motion picture houses
 - performing arts centers
 - playhouses
 - public hearing rooms
 - public meeting rooms
 - stadiums
 - theaters
- (and many other places)



FM system,
Infrared system,
direct-wired



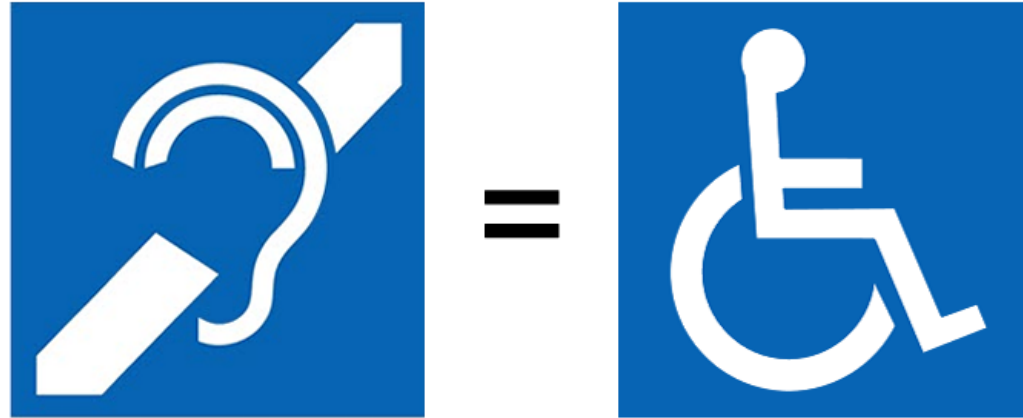
Hearing Loop



Self Advocacy

- ADA
- Handouts and Templates

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)



Assistive listening systems help people with hearing loss similarly as ramps help people with mobility needs.

- People with disabilities have **equal** access at no additional cost.
- Yes, hearing loss is considered a disability under the ADA

“Hearing loss isn't the problem –
The problem is the lack of communication access”

-Christy Abrams



Assistive Listening Systems



Feedback?
Complaint?

1. **Inquiring** (optional). 'Should' be in place; no need to request. However, some institutions may require ~2 days notification
2. **Using** assistive listening systems.
3. **Saying** something (optional). Feedback and complaints
 - a) What happened
 - b) What you'd like to see changed or continue
 - c) Option: Use either attachment (saves time)
 - [Hearing Loss and The Need for Assistive Listening Systems](#) (2 pages, pdf)
 - [ADA requirements & Assistive Listening Systems](#) (1 page, pdf).
Short summary of the ADA requirements for assistive listening

Resources

- Templates: [Consumer empowerment](#)



Healthcare: Communication Access

Consumers ▾ Audiologists ▾ Facilities ▾ Sectors ▾

HEALTHCARE

ACCESS (Communication framework)

Patient Experiences (Stories)

Hearing Loss Statistics (general)

Hearing Loss and Healthcare-Statistics

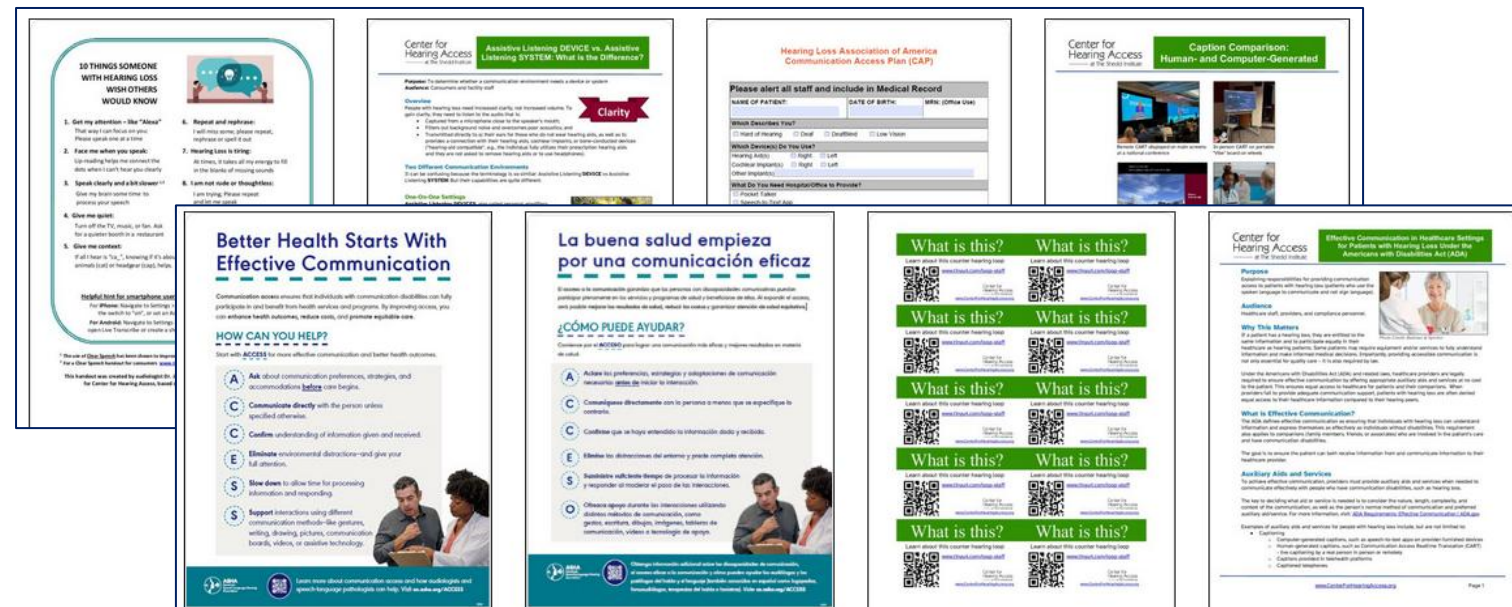
Technology for Healthcare

- Assistive Listening Systems
- Captions-Computer Generated
- Captions-Human Generated
- Personal Amplifiers
- Remote Microphones

Healthcare Resources

- Blog-HealthcareWithHearingLoss.com
- Complaints
- ADA and Healthcare
- Articles, etc.
- HANDOUTS
- Masks with Clear Windows (lipreading)

- 3 sections: patient, provider, general info
- Everything available on CHA website



<https://centerforhearingaccess.org/healthcare-tools/>

Resources

Handouts

www.CenterForHearingAccess.org/**Winchester**

Quick Hearing Check

BETTER HEARING INSTITUTE

Introduction
The following hearing loss test is based on the Revised American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) five-minute hearing check.* It is a means of quickly assessing if you possibly have a hearing loss requiring referral for an objective hearing test and possible hearing solution. This test is related to objective measures of hearing loss using audiological equipment. In step #1 you are asked to respond to 15 items related to your hearing. In step #2 you will score your hearing and in step #3 (next page) you will be able to compare yourself to 2,304 adults with hearing loss.

Instructions
With respect to your hearing please think about your experiences with each of the following WITHOUT the use of hearing aids or other devices designed to help you hear better. For each item, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree (circle one number for each item).

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	STRONGLY AGREE
I have a problem hearing over the telephone	0	1	2	3	4	
I have trouble following the conversation when two or more people are talking at the same time	0	1	2	3	4	
I have trouble understanding things on TV	0	1	2	3	4	
I have to strain to understand conversations	0	1	2	3	4	
I have to worry about missing a telephone ring or doorbell	0	1	2	3	4	
I have trouble hearing conversations in a noisy background such as a crowded room or restaurant	0	1	2	3	4	
I get confused about where sounds come from	0	1	2	3	4	
I misunderstand some words in a sentence and need to ask people to repeat themselves	0	1	2	3	4	
I especially have trouble understanding the speech of women and children	0	1	2	3	4	
I have trouble understanding the speaker in a large room such as at a meeting or place of worship	0	1	2	3	4	
Many people I talk to seem to mumble (or don't speak clearly)	0	1	2	3	4	
People get annoyed because I misunderstand what they say	0	1	2	3	4	
I misunderstand what others are saying and make inappropriate responses	0	1	2	3	4	
I avoid social activities because I cannot hear well and fear I will reply improperly	0	1	2	3	4	
Family members and friends have told me they think I may have a hearing loss	0	1	2	3	4	

Instructions
Add up scores in each column scored 1-4
Continued on reverse side...

My neighbor "Jack" has a technical vocabulary to ensure communication hearing loss. A retired NASA engineer, he has an entire family and needs to be in our community of Annapolis, Maryland. When I asked him how much I could help, he handed me a one-page handout provided to him by his audiologist. "Can you help me choose the best model?" he asked.

Best Practices in Hearing Enhancement

What Jack Discovered and What Every Consumer Should Know

By Cynthia Cummings-Gardley

Hearing Better in Public Places

Understanding Assistive Listening, Telecoils, Bluetooth®, and Auracast™

Hearing in large areas such as theaters, churches, and large meeting rooms, or in places with background noise, can reveal some limitations of hearing aids. In such settings, you need different tools to assist your hearing. Just as you use binoculars to see distant objects and reading glasses to enlarge fine print, **Assistive devices and Bluetooth wireless streaming can provide the binoculars for your ears.**

Personal Bluetooth: You probably already experience the benefits of using Bluetooth connections between your hearing aids to adjust settings and listen to phone calls, music, audiobooks, podcasts, TV, or virtual meetings on your computer. Using Bluetooth to deliver audio directly to your ears provides a clearer, more personal listening experience.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) acknowledges the difficulty that some people with hearing loss have in understanding speech in public places. This law requires that, in venues where audio amplification is used, an **Assistive Listening System** be provided, that the technology be hearing-aid-compatible, and that it be offered to the public free of charge.

Assistive Listening Systems capture audio from microphones on a stage or lectern and deliver it directly to a person's ears, reducing the adverse effects of reverberation, background noise, and distance. This means you will hear audio in the venue with exceptional clarity.

You may encounter several types of assistive listening systems:



Hearing Loops can connect wirelessly to hearing aids via a telecoil. If this feature is built in, there's no need to borrow a listening device from the venue. Look for places that display the hearing loop logo with the letter T (which stands for Telecoil). To find the thousands of hearing loops used in the US: www.CenterforHearingAccess.org/state-lists



Auracast used as an Assistive Listening System, a new Bluetooth LE Audio technology. Auracast is just beginning to appear in new hearing aids and in some consumer electronic devices (like TVs and Android phones). The adoption of Auracast in public places is expected to accelerate over the next 2-5 years. If you don't have Auracast built into your instruments, ask for a receiver with a neckloop or headphones. Auracast installations can be found on Google Maps and www.bluetooth.com/auracast/auracast-locations

10 THINGS SOMEONE WITH HEARING LOSS WISH OTHERS WOULD KNOW

- Get my attention – like "Alexa"**
That way I can focus on you: Please speak one at a time
- Face me when you speak:**
Lip-reading helps me connect the dots when I can't hear you clearly
- Speak clearly and a bit slower**
Give my brain some time to process your speech
- Give me quiet:**
Turn off the TV, music, or fan. Ask for a quieter booth in a restaurant
- Give me context:**
If all I hear is "ca," knowing if it's about animals (cat) or headgear (cap), helps.
- Repeat and rephrase:**
I will miss some; please repeat, rephrase or spell it out
- Hearing Loss is tiring:**
At times, it takes all my energy to fill in the blanks of missing sounds
- I am not rude or thoughtless:**
I am trying; Please repeat and let me speak
- Be kind to me:**
When you get frustrated, I would rather opt out and be alone
- Hearing aids are not glasses:**
Sounds are louder, but not 100% clear, especially in noisy places: My optimal hearing range is about 2-3-4 arm-lengths

Helpful hint for smartphone users – Use Live Captions for real-time text
For iPhone: Navigate to Settings > Accessibility > Live Captions, then toggle the switch to "on," or set an Accessibility Shortcut with a triple-click.
For Android: Navigate to Settings > Accessibility > Live Transcribe, then tap open Live Transcribe or create a shortcut by tapping the accessibility button.

* The use of Clear Speech has been shown to improve communication: www.bjurl.com/Clear-Speech-Study
† For a Clear Speech handout for consumers: www.bjurl.com/Clear-Speech
This handout was created by audiologist Dr. Juliette Sterkens, AuD – jsterkens@hearingloss.org for Center for Hearing Access, based on bjurl.com/all-media/helpful-facts

Hearing Aid Buying Guide

Juliette Sterkens, AuD
jsterkens@hearingloss.org

Choosing a hearing care provider - Audiologists and Hearing Aid Dispensers (sometimes called Hearing Instrument Specialists) are licensed to fit and sell hearing aids in most states. Audiologists typically have a doctoral degree (AuD) and are trained to determine with specialized tests whether you might have an underlying medical issue (such as a bacterial infection, impacted earwax, or a tumor in your ear) that is causing your hearing loss and to refer you to a physician if necessary. Dispensers are trained to recognize problems that require a medical referral, but their scope of practice is limited to hearing aid fittings. Be sure to interview prospective providers as to their adherence to the American Academy of Audiology Best Fitting Practices and provision of verification and validation measures (more on this below.)

THE HEARING EVALUATION

A screening or hearing exam - Hearing screenings are quick pass/fail tests to find out if you need a full hearing evaluation. Hearing exams (assessments) determine the degree of hearing loss, the type of hearing loss, and the configuration of hearing loss and are conducted in a soundproof booth and must be conducted prior to your being fitted with hearing aids. A hearing exam will include testing your comprehension of spoken words and should always include a Speech-in-Noise test to determine the best hearing aid options, need for accessories and better counseling*.

Your audiogram - The audiogram is a graph that displays the results of the hearing exam. Pure tone audiometry is used to obtain hearing thresholds (softest level heard) at different pitches and the thresholds are represented on the audiogram for the right ear and the left ear. If the exam reveals a hearing loss, the threshold results determine the degree, type, and configuration of the hearing loss. The audiogram also typically displays the results from speech audiometry testing. This consists of speech threshold testing (the softest level at which speech can be understood) and speech recognition testing, which measures how well speech is understood. Speech audiometry provides important information in addition to pure tone audiometry.

Your type of hearing loss - Your provider should explain which type of hearing loss you have:

Sensorineural Hearing Loss occurs when the hearing organ (the cochlea), and/or the auditory nerve is damaged or malfunctions, so it is unable to accurately send the electrical information to the brain. Sensorineural Hearing Loss is nearly always permanent.

Conductive Hearing Loss occurs when there is a problem with the Outer or Middle Ear which interferes with the passing of sound to the inner ear. It can be caused by such things as too much earwax, an infection in the ear, a punctured eardrum, a fluid build-up, or abnormal bone growth in the Middle Ear such as Otosclerosis.

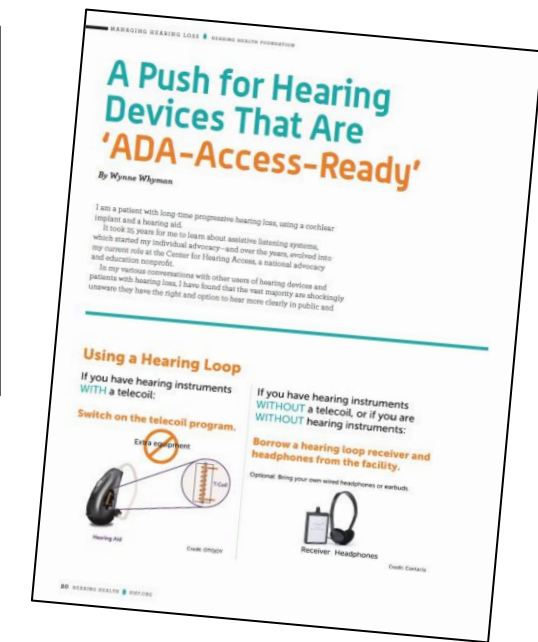
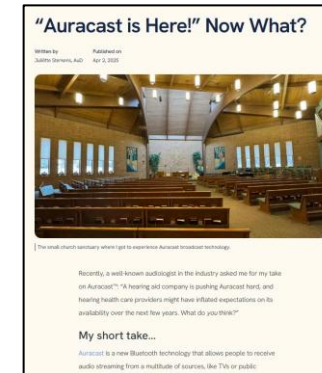
Mixed Hearing Loss occurs when both Conductive Hearing Loss and Sensorineural Hearing Loss are present. The sensorineural component is permanent, while the conductive component can be either permanent or temporary.

* www.audiologyonline.com/ask-the-experts/speech-in-noise-testing-worth-10155

45

Resources

- **Center for Hearing Access** www.CenterForHearingAccess.org
 - Resources for FM, IR, hearing loops, Audio Over Wi-Fi, and Auracast
 - Resources for “ADA-Access-Ready” hearing aids, captions, personal amplifiers, etc.
 - Videos: what hearing loss sounds like, what assistive listening systems sound like.
- **Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)** www.hearingloss.org
 - Provides information, education, support, and advocacy for users.
- **Articles, papers, and video**
 - Sterkens, J. (March 2024) TEDx talk. [What you don't know about hearing aids](#)
 - Sterkens, J. (4/2/25) [“Auracast is Here!” Now What?](#) *HearingTracker*
 - Whyman, W. (April 2025) [“A Push for Hearing Devices that are ‘ADA-Access-Ready’](#) *Hearing Health Foundation*, Quarterly publication. 4 pp.
 - Roberts, C. (updated Feb 12, 2026) [Make Your Hearing Aids Work Harder.](#) *Consumer Reports*. Quote by W. Whyman
 - Roberts, C (May 7, 2026) [A Telecoil is One of the Best Hearing Aid Features. Many Still Aren't Using It.](#) *Consumer Reports*. Quotes by W. Whyman and J. Sterkens

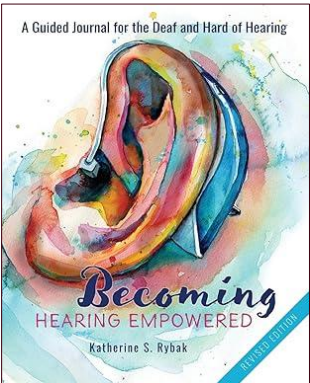
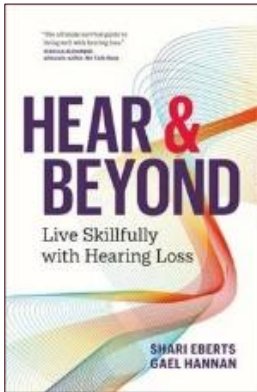
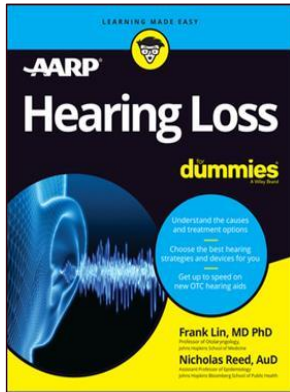
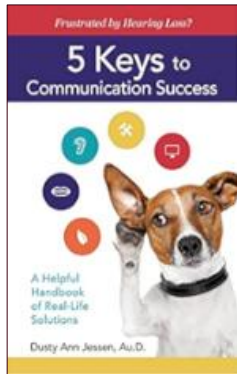


Hearing Aid and Audiologist Resources

- Sterkens and Whyman. National Council on Aging. 5/13/22. [Hearing Health for Older Adults: What Older Adults Need to Know About Hearing Loss](#)
- [How to Find a Good Audiologist](#) (webpage). Hearing Tracker 2022.
- Center for Hearing Access. [Hearing Loss Resources and Hearing Aids](#)
- Dr. Cliff videos and resources
 - [5 questions to ask](#) (1 page) www.hearingup.com/5-questions-to-ask
 - [Best Practices](#), Consultation Checklist (5 pages)

More Resources (Books)

Curated [online library of books for people who are hard of hearing](#) (or d/Deaf). Browse the books that have been published and consider making a request for them at your local library. Maintained by Nashville Public Library, TN.

			
<u>Becoming Hearing Empowered:</u> A Guided Journal for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 2024, 2nd edition. Katherine Rybak (Consumer)	<u>Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss,</u> 2022. Shari Eberts and Gael Hannan (Consumers)	<u>Hearing Loss for Dummies,</u> 2022. Frank Lin, MD, and Nicholas Reed, AuD. Johns Hopkins University, AARP. (Medical & research)	<u>5 Keys to Communication Success,</u> 2013. Dusty Jessen, AuD (Audiologist)

Further Questions, Discussion



Feedback

- Upon zoom exit
- Share your thoughts



Next for Age Well Series



Stay Steady, Stay Connected: How Social Connection Supports Mobility as We Age

Social connection plays an important role in helping us stay healthy, active, and resilient. Join us to explore the link between social isolation, loneliness, and falls risk. We'll discuss how a fear of falling can lead to reduced activity, increased isolation, and decreased physical function, as well as ways to overcome the stigma that can prevent people from seeking support.

Participants will learn how meaningful relationships, community engagement, volunteering, and group activities can support physical and emotional well-being, boost confidence and mobility, and help build resilience against falls.

September 24
11 a.m. - 12 p.m.



Presenter: Debby Berenz,
Curative Therapy Services

[Register Here](#)



Next for Age Well Series

Age Well
Series

The Power of Your Gut: How the Microbiome Shapes Healthy Aging

The foods we eat do more than provide energy—they also shape the health of our gut microbiome, the trillions of microorganisms that play an important role in digestion, immunity, and overall well-being. In this webinar, you'll learn how the gut microbiome interacts with the immune system and why these connections become increasingly important as we age. We'll explore the latest research on how diet influences gut health, what scientists are discovering about the relationship between the gut microbiome and healthy aging, and practical strategies that may help support lifelong health and reduce the risk of chronic disease.



Presenters:
Margaret Alexander, PhD
Assistant Professor, University
of Wisconsin - Madison

October 8
1:00-2:00pm

[Register Here](#)



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<https://wihealthyaging.org/?give=8NDR96EK>

<https://wihealthyaging.org/find-a-workshop/>

Healthy Living with Chronic Pain

Learn skills and strategies to better manage your chronic pain with this 6-week workshop.

[See Schedule](#)

Healthy Living with Diabetes

Learn skills and strategies to better manage your diabetes in this 6-week program.

[See Schedule](#)

Living Well with Chronic Conditions

Learn skills and strategies to better manage your health and help you to age well in this 6-week program.

[See Schedule](#)

Mind Over Matter: Healthy Bowels, Healthy Bladder

Improve or prevent bowel and bladder incontinence in this 3-session program. (For women only)

[See Schedule](#)

Physical Activity for Lifelong Success

A program designed for those who have not exercised in a while, this 10-week program will help you get started with being active!

[See Schedule](#)

Pisando Fuerte

Aprende como prevenir caídas con este programa de prevención de caídas multifactorial de 8 semanas.

[See Schedule](#)

Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Receive support and learn how to care for yourself as you provide care to another. To find a workshop, visit:
<https://www.powerfultoolsforcaregivers.org/class-type/wisconsin/>

[See Schedule](#)

Stand Up for Your Health

Sitting too much can be bad for your health. Learn how to sit less and stand more with this 4-week program.

[See Schedule](#)

Stepping On

Learn how to prevent falls with this 7-week multi-factorial fall prevention program.

[See Schedule](#)

Tomando Control de Su Salud

Learn skills and strategies to better manage your health and help you to age well in this 6-week program.

[See Schedule](#)

Vivir Saludable con Diabetes

Learn skills and strategies to better manage your diabetes in this 6-week program.

[See Schedule](#)

Walk with Ease

This 6-week walking program helps you to become more active, reduce pain from arthritis, and live better.

[See Schedule](#)



Q&A

