



May 2018

Better Hearing Month



Many factors can contribute to hearing loss as you get older. It can be difficult to distinguish age-related hearing loss from hearing loss that can occur for other reasons, such as long-term exposure to noise.

- Approximately one in three people in the United States between the ages of 65 and 74 has hearing loss, and nearly half of those older than 75 have difficulty hearing.
- Having trouble hearing can make it hard to understand and follow a doctor's advice, respond to warnings, and hear phones, doorbells, and smoke alarms.
- Hearing loss can also make it hard to enjoy talking with family and friends, leading to feelings of isolation.

Age-related hearing loss most often occurs in both ears, affecting them equally.

- Because the loss is gradual, you may not realize that you've lost some of your ability to hear.
- There are many causes of age-related hearing loss such as changes in the inner ear, middle ear, or along the nerve pathways from the ear to the brain.

Noise-induced hearing loss is caused by long-term exposure to sounds that are either too loud or last too long. This kind of noise exposure can damage the sensory hair cells in your ear that allow you to hear.



Other causes of hearing loss includes:

- Conditions that are more common in older people, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, can contribute to hearing loss.
- Medications that are toxic to the sensory cells in your ears (for example, some chemotherapy drugs) can also cause hearing loss.

Most older people who experience hearing loss have a combination of both age-related hearing loss and noise-induced hearing loss.

Can I prevent hearing loss?

We don't yet know how to prevent age-related hearing loss. However, you can protect yourself from noise-induced hearing loss.

Too Loud. Too Long.

The extent of damage to your hearing caused by noise depends on:

- ⇒ **Decibel level:** How loud the sound is.
- ⇒ **Distance:** How close you are to the source of the sound.
- ⇒ **Time:** The length of time you are exposed to the sound.



Tips for Safe Listening

- Lower the volume. Some music devices let you set volume control limits.
- Move away from the noise. Don't sit/stand right in front of concert speakers.
- Wear hearing protectors, such as earplugs or earmuffs. If you find you don't have hearing protection, cover your ears with your hands.

Find out more at *It's a Noisy Planet*.

<https://www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov/parents/too-loud-too-long>.

What should I do if I have trouble hearing?

Hearing problems can be serious. If you think you have a hearing problem see your doctor. They can evaluate your situation and determine if you need to see a hearing specialist.

What treatments and devices can help?

Treatment will depend on the cause and severity of your hearing loss. Hearing aids can improve quality of life for most people with hearing loss.

Good news about Cancer

Death rates from cancer in the U.S. fell 26 percent from 1991 to 2015, according to the American Cancer Society. Notable declines were in lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal cancers. Likely reasons? Advances in detection and treatment, and lifestyle changes such as lower smoking rates.

A cancer Journal for Clinicians, Jan. 4, 2018.

How Loud is Too Loud?

The louder the sound, the more damage it can cause to your hearing, and the quicker this damage will occur.

Sound is measured in **decibels**. Any sounds at or over 85 decibels can damage your hearing. People who are exposed over long periods of time to noise levels at 85 decibels or higher are at a much greater risk for hearing loss.

Here are some examples of how loud some common noises are.

- ◆ Pin drop: 0 decibels
- ◆ Whisper: 30 decibels
- ◆ Refrigerator: 40 decibels
- ◆ Normal conversation: 60 decibels
- ◆ Dishwasher: 75 decibels
- ◆ Heavy city traffic, school cafeteria: 85 decibels
- ◆ Gas lawn mower: 90 decibels
- ◆ Woodshop, snowmobile: 100 decibels
- ◆ Music player at maximum volume: 105 decibels
- ◆ Music concert: 110 decibels
- ◆ Ambulance siren: 120 decibels
- ◆ Jet engine taking off: 140 decibels
- ◆ Firecracker: 140–165 decibels



Do You Need a Hearing Test?

If you are 18 to 64 years old, the following questions will help you determine if you need to have your hearing tested by a health professional. Answer YES or NO.

1. Do you sometimes feel embarrassed when you meet new people because you struggle to hear?
2. Do you feel frustrated when talking to members of your family because you have difficulty hearing them?
3. Do you have difficulty hearing or understanding co-workers, clients, or customers?
4. Do you feel restricted or limited by a hearing problem?
5. Do you have difficulty hearing when visiting friends, relatives, or neighbors?
6. Do you have trouble hearing in the movies or in the theater?
7. Does a hearing problem cause you to argue with family members?
8. Do you have trouble hearing the TV or radio at levels that are loud enough for others?
9. Do you feel that any difficulty with your hearing limits your personal life or social life?
10. Do you have trouble hearing family or friends when you are together in a restaurant?

If you answered “yes” to three or more of these questions, you may want to see an otolaryngologist (an ear, nose, and throat specialist) or an audiologist for a hearing evaluation.

May 31, 2018 is World No Tobacco Day — Is it time for you to quit?

1. **There are immediate and long-term health benefits of quitting, such as:** ◆ 2-12 weeks, your circulation and lung function improves ◆ 1-9 months, coughing and shortness of breath decrease ◆ 5 years, your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker ◆ 10 years, your risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker ◆ 15 years, the risk of heart disease is that of a nonsmoker's.
2. **People who already have smoking-related health problems can still benefit from quitting.** People that quit smoking after having a heart attack reduce their chances of having another heart attack by 50%.
3. **Quitting smoking decreases the excess risk of many diseases related to second-hand smoke in children,** such as respiratory diseases (e.g., asthma) and ear infections.
4. **Other benefits.** Quitting smoking reduces the chances of impotence, having difficulty getting pregnant, having premature births, babies with low birth weights and miscarriage.



Nutrition Nook — Canned beans vs. dried beans

- ◆ Canning, cooking, and soaking can change the nutritional content of beans a bit.
- ◆ Canned beans frequently have added salt, which can be a problem if you're watching your sodium.
- ◆ Both are a good source of fiber, protein, and nutrients such as folate and potassium.
- ◆ Canned beans are also ready to eat, while dry beans need to be soaked for hours or even overnight before cooking.
- ◆ If you don't have time for soaking, look for low or no-sodium varieties of canned beans, or drain and rinse canned beans to reduce the sodium by up to 40 percent.

