

Hearing Loss and Older Adults

Approximately one-third of older adults experience hearing loss, and the likelihood of developing it rises with age.

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What is age-related hearing loss?

Age-related hearing loss (presbycusis) occurs gradually for many of us as we grow older.

It usually occurs in both ears, affecting them equally. Because the loss is gradual, people with presbycusis may not realize they have lost some of their ability to hear.

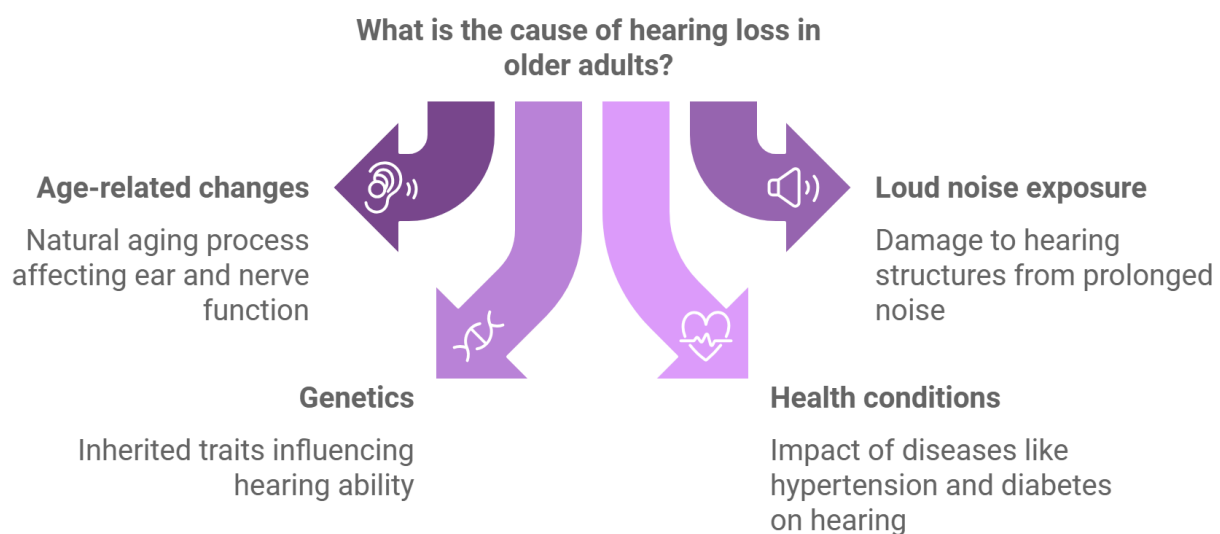
In a study of Canadians aged 40 to 79, 8% of men and 5% of women self-reported hearing impairment. However, actual measurements found that 63% of men and 46% of women had measurable hearing loss.

What are the signs of hearing loss?

- Difficulty understanding what people are saying on the phone?
- Struggling to follow conversations when two or more people are talking or when there is background noise
- Trouble hearing higher-pitched voices
- Turning the TV volume up so high that it bothers others.
- Asking people to repeat what they are saying

What causes hearing loss in older adults?

1. Age-related changes in the middle ear and nerve pathways to the brain
2. Long-term exposure to loud noise
3. Genetics
4. Conditions such as hypertension and diabetes are often associated with hearing loss



Health impacts

Hearing loss can make it hard to understand and follow a doctor's advice, respond to warnings, and hear phones and doorbells.

It can also make it challenging to enjoy conversations with family and friends, resulting in feelings of isolation.

Tips for coping with hearing loss

- Let family and friends know about your hearing problem.
- Ask people to face you and to speak loudly and clearly.
- Ask them to repeat themselves or reword what they're saying.
- Position yourself between the speaker and noise sources, or find quieter places to talk.

Getting help

The most important thing you can do if you have a hearing problem is to seek professional advice.

Start with your family doctor, who may be able to diagnose and treat your hearing problem.

Your doctor may refer you to other specialists, such as an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat doctor) or an audiologist who can identify and measure hearing loss.

What types of assistive devices are available?

Assistive listening devices (ALDs) amplify specific sounds, especially in noisy environments. They can be used with a hearing aid or cochlear implant.

Alerting devices connect to a doorbell, telephone, or alarm to notify individuals with hearing loss using loud sounds or blinking lights.

Prescription Hearing aids

Hearing aids are electronic, battery-run assistive devices that make some sounds louder.

An audiologist can prescribe hearing aids for individuals with significant or complicated hearing loss.

Prescription hearing aids require a medical examination, and then the healthcare professional will fit and adjust the device.

A mid-level hearing aid in Canada will cost between \$1500 to \$2000 each after Provincial assistance.

Be sure to check out the [Provincial Hearing Aid Plans](#) to see if you qualify for financial assistance in purchasing a hearing aid.

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

In Canada, hearing aids are regulated as medical devices, requiring a prescription from a hearing care professional. In contrast to the United States, over-the-counter hearing aids are unavailable in Canada.

You may find personal sound amplification products online without a prescription, but these are not the same as hearing aids. These devices may amplify sound, but they lack the customization and advanced features necessary to address specific hearing loss types effectively.

Apple announced that this fall, it will offer an upgrade for AirPods Pro 2 users, allowing them to take a clinical-level hearing test, effectively making the AirPods

Pro 2 approved in the US as over-the-counter hearing aids.

<https://www.nicenet.ca/news/apple-announces-airpod-hearing-aid-functionality>

That's important because of the lower cost and the historical stigma associated with hearing aids; millions of people already wear AirPods, finding them stylish and widely accepted for music, audiobooks, podcasts, and more.

References:

Age-Related Hearing Loss (Presbycusis)

<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/age-related-hearing-loss>

Hearing Loss: A Common Problem for Older Adults

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/hearing-and-hearing-loss/hearing-loss-common-problem-older-adults>

Assistive Devices for People with Hearing, Voice, Speech, or Language Disorders

<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/assistive-devices-people-hearing-voice-speech-or-language-disorders>

Noise and sound: Hearing loss and tinnitus

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/noise-your-health/hearing-loss-tinnitus.html>

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