

# Living in silence

How hearing loss affects your life.



*Ear & Hearing*  
AUSTRALIA

Helping people hear better for life

# What is hearing loss?

*‘Not being able to see  
isolates you from objects.  
Not being able to hear  
isolates you from people’.*

*Immanuel Kant.*

Hearing loss means many things: not hearing the doorbell ring, not hearing your husband or wife call you from another room, missing key information in a business meeting or avoiding seeing friends for fear of being found out.

Whichever it is, hearing loss interferes with the quality of your life by restricting your interaction with others, causing misunderstandings, stress and fatigue.

Hearing loss filters out all the wonderful sound experiences which give pleasure and meaning to life. Then there are the safety aspects. Imagine the ramifications of not being able to hear the smoke detector.





# Can it be treated?

Great news! Hearing aid technology is advancing rapidly, which means your hearing can be improved considerably. By taking the time to adjust to wearing professionally fitted hearing instruments, you'll notice a marked improvement in the quality of your life.

So why do most people hesitate to seek help for their hearing loss? Onset is gradual and it can often take years for a hearing loss to develop. Then there's denial. While hearing loss is a natural part of the ageing process, few of us want to admit we're growing older.

If you're experiencing difficulty hearing, it's time for a full hearing assessment. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain!

A photograph of an older man and woman embracing outdoors. The man, on the left, has grey hair and wears glasses and a green jacket. The woman, on the right, has blonde hair and wears a light-colored jacket. They are both looking down and appear to be in a moment of emotional connection. The background is a clear blue sky with a hint of a body of water and a sailboat in the distance.

# Communication breakdown

**Hearing loss can create three main types of communication difficulty.**

## **Loss of sensitivity**

When a person loses hearing sensitivity, every sound appears softer than normal. Soft sounds need to be amplified so they can be heard.

In the case of high frequency loss, you may have problems hearing and understanding soft, high pitched consonants such as f, s, sh, th, t and p. When this happens, it becomes difficult to distinguish between words like cat, fat and rat. This makes it hard to follow a conversation.



### **Loss of speech discrimination**

This usually comes with sensorineural hearing losses and auditory deprivation. Speaking louder or turning up the volume does not usually compensate for a loss of discrimination.

People with moderate or severe speech discrimination loss may experience difficulties distinguishing words even if they receive enough loudness.

### **Loss of focus**

People who have no problem understanding speech in quieter conversations may experience difficulties when background noise is present. While the background noise may not be as loud as the speech itself, it can still 'mask' the sounds you need to hear to understand.

Someone with normal hearing can usually separate speech from background sounds. However, those with a hearing loss, sounds like background music, people talking in a restaurant or a car driving past outside can make it very difficult to distinguish speech from other sounds.

People with sensorineural hearing losses often experience all these problems to varying degrees. Depending on the severity of hearing loss, some people have difficulties only in certain situations, whereas others might have problems with every hearing situation.





# Hearing loss diminishes your quality of life

Hearing loss usually comes on so gradually that many people don't even realise it's happening. Your brain helps you adapt in subtle ways: you ask others to repeat themselves, you turn up the volume on the TV or you turn your 'good' ear towards the source of the sound.

But there are even deeper symptoms of hearing loss. You may begin to experience emotional and psychological effects like:

- anxiety in social situations
- difficulty interacting with children
- inability to enjoy music, theatre, church or public speakers
- a sense of isolation, depression and withdrawal

Hearing-impaired people improve their all-round quality of life when their hearing loss is treated with proper hearing aids.

### **State of mind.**

Untreated hearing loss can have serious negative psychological effects. Some people may withdraw from social situations or refrain from favourite hobbies. They may avoid interaction with others for fear of appearing confused, inept - or especially with elderly people – senile.

Shame, anger, embarrassment, lack of concentration, irritability, paranoia, depression, worry, frustration, insecurity and low self-esteem can all occur when there's a hearing loss.

### **Ability to socialise.**

Common social problems for people with untreated hearing loss include: isolation, withdrawal, inattentiveness, bluffing, distraction, problems at work, reduced social activity, problems communicating with your husband or wife, friends and relatives and even loss of intimacy.

In 1999, the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) conducted a survey called: 'Breaking the Sound Barrier'. Results showed that 71% of deaf and hard-of-hearing people felt isolated because of their hearing loss, 39% avoided meeting new people and 91% had difficulties coping in public places.

### **The physical burden.**

Untreated hearing loss often results in physical problems. These may include: exhaustion, headache, vertigo, tense muscles, stress, inability to exercise, loss of appetite, insomnia, stomach problems, increased blood pressure and sexual problems.



### **Impact on friends and family.**

Hearing loss doesn't just affect individuals – it affects everyone who interacts with them. While the hearing-impaired person in your life may experience anxiety, isolation and depression, you may feel irritation, frustration and anger at their inability to hear you.

While these are all normal reactions, the best thing you can do for them is to suggest they receive a professional hearing assessment. Talk openly with them and try to help them recognise their hearing problem. Suggest they read this brochure and other hearing-related information.



# Gaining a new lease on life

When hearing impairment is left untreated, total quality of life suffers. When your hearing loss is professionally treated you'll be amazed at how quickly and fully all the joys of life come back to you again. Gentle sounds of nature, spirited conversations, the radio ... all the sounds you love to hear will be even more precious this time around.

In 1999, the National Council on the Ageing (NCOA) surveyed a cross section of hearing-impaired people over the age of 50. It demonstrated that those whose hearing loss was treated reported the following benefits:

- better relationships with their families
- higher self-esteem
- improved mental health
- greater independence and security

So what are you waiting for?



## **Take the first step towards better hearing.**

The great news is there are many ways to help people with hearing loss. Some hearing problems can be improved by surgery, however most people benefit from wearing hearing aids.

Once you've adjusted to wearing professionally fitted instruments, you'll notice a definite improvement in the quality of your life and you'll be back to doing the things you love.

## **Call Ear & Hearing Australia today.**

We provide complete audiology services at several locations throughout Melbourne.

For more information or to make an appointment, please:

**Call 1800 HEARING  
(1800 432 746)**

**Or visit our website  
[www.ear-hearing.com.au](http://www.ear-hearing.com.au)**

## **Clinic Locations:**

### **KEW**

2 Cotham Rd

Ph: (03) 9853 3828

### **CAMBERWELL**

367 Camberwell Rd

Ph: (03) 9882 5577

### **ASHBURTON**

3/330 High Street

Ph: (03) 9885 8106

### **RESERVOIR**

4 Edwardes St

Ph: (03) 9853 3828

### **MALVERN**

35 Glenferrie Rd

Ph: (03) 9509 1830

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