

ABOUT HEARING LOSS

HEARING AID AWARENESS WEEK
SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 4, 2008

Information provided by the **International Hearing Society** - www.ihinfo.org

Symptoms of Hearing Loss

You should suspect a hearing loss if you:

- have a family history of hearing loss
- have been repeatedly exposed to high noise levels
- are inclined to believe that "everybody mumbles" or "people don't speak as clearly as they used to"
- feel growing nervous tension, irritability or fatigue from the effort to hear
- find yourself straining to understand conversations and watching people's faces intently when you are listening
- frequently misunderstand or need to have things repeated
- increase the television or radio volume to a point that others complain of the loudness
- have diabetes; heart, thyroid, or circulation problems; reoccurring ear infections; constant ringing in the ears; dizziness; or exposure to ototoxic drugs or medications

HOW LOUD IS TOO LOUD?

150	Firecracker
120	Ambulance siren
110	Chainsaw, Rock Concert
105	Personal stereo at maximum level
100	Wood shop, Snowmobile
95	Motorcycle
90	Power mower
85	Heavy city traffic
60	Normal conversation
40	Refrigerator humming
30	Whispered voice

110 Decibels Regular exposure of more than one minute risks permanent hearing loss.

100 Decibels No more than 15 minutes unprotected exposure recommended.

85 Decibels Prolonged exposure to any noise above 85 decibels can cause gradual hearing loss.

How Our Hearing Works

As sound passes through each ear, it sets off a chain reaction that could be compared to the toppling of a row of dominoes. First, the outer ear collects pressure (or sound) waves and funnels them through the ear canal. These vibrations strike the eardrum, then the delicate bones of the middle ear conduct the vibrations to the fluid in the inner ear. This stimulates the tiny nerve endings, called hair cells, which transform the vibrations into electro-chemical impulses. The impulses travel to the brain where they are understood as sounds you recognize.

Types of Hearing Loss

A number of conditions can exist that cause a disruption in the hearing process and lead to hearing loss. The two most common types of hearing loss are sensorineural and conductive.

Sensorineural Hearing Loss

Sensori-Neural (or "nerve" hearing loss) results from damage to the hair cells, nerve fibers or both in the inner ear. This is the most common type of hearing loss and is often caused by aging or prolonged exposure to noise. People with sensorineural hearing loss can hear speech, but frequently have difficulty understanding it. Sensorineural hearing loss is most commonly treated by the use of a hearing instrument, and generally cannot be corrected through surgery or medicine.

Conductive Hearing Loss

Conductive hearing loss typically involves an obstruction in the outer or middle ear, which reduces transmission of sound vibration through air, bone or tissue to the inner ear. Fortunately, many conductive hearing losses can be treated successfully by medical or surgical procedures. Hearing instruments can also successfully treat conductive hearing loss. Persons with both conductive and sensori-neural hearing loss are commonly referred to as having mixed hearing loss.