



Link Between Alzheimer's and Hearing Loss

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Is Hearing Loss a Warning Sign of Dementia?

Hearing loss is very common as we age, but did you know it could also be an indication that Alzheimer's or another form of dementia may be on the way?

By 65, around one in three people have experienced some hearing loss. When you lose your hearing certain nerves in your brain become less active, resulting in reduced overall brain activity, which increases your likelihood of developing dementia.

If you are concerned you may be losing your hearing, see your doctor about possible solutions.

Staying as active as you can, both physically and mentally, is the best way to reduce your chances of developing Alzheimer's. Getting regular exercise like walking for 30 minutes every day and keeping your brain ticking with things like learning new skills and doing puzzles can help keep you sharp.

Read on to learn more about Alzheimer's and hearing loss.

From
MD Hearing Aid

The Link Between Alzheimer's and Hearing Loss

Many of the symptoms associated with early Alzheimer's disease are the same as those associated with hearing loss. In fact, among those over 60, hearing loss accounted for over one-third of the risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's.

Looking at the Numbers

Hearing Loss

According to the World Health Organization hearing loss is not being able to hear sounds of 25 decibels or less in the speech frequencies.

48 Million people in the United States experience some type of hearing loss.



48 MILLION

At age 65, 1 out of every 3 people have hearing loss.

60% of Veterans of the war in Iraq & Afghanistan experienced hearing loss upon return.

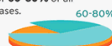
Men are more likely than women to experience hearing loss.

Hearing impairment occurs in about **18%** of American adults between ages 45 and 54, **30%** of adults between ages 65 and 74, and **47%** of adults ages 75 and older.

Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's is a type of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time.

Most common type of dementia accounts for **60-80%** of all dementia cases.

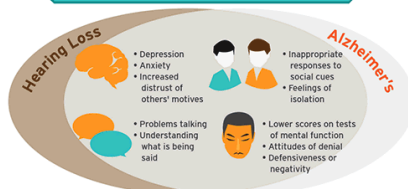


More than **5 million** Americans
are living with the disease.

5 MILLION

Every **67 seconds** someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's.

The Most Common Symptoms of Both



 As Hearing Loss **Increases**, So Does Your Dementia Risk

Many of the symptoms associated with early Alzheimer's disease are the same as those associated with hearing loss. In fact, among those over 60, hearing loss accounted for over one-third of the risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's.

Brain and Hearing

How We Hear

Sound travels into the ear and stimulates small hair cells

Vibration of the hair cells trigger electrical impulses to travel along nerves to the brain stem

From the brain stem, the electrical impulses travel to the temporal lobe, just above the ear.



Brain Activity & Hearing Are Related

- The temporal cortex, occipital cortex, posterior parietal cortex and brain stem, all play a role in the ability to hear a sound and perceive its location.
- Even mild hearing loss DOUBLED the dementia risk.
- The risk of dementia appears to rise as hearing declines.

The Effects of Hearing Loss on the Brain

Due to age or exposure to loud noises for a long period of time, the small hair cells can disappear.

The less hair cells, the harder it is to capture sound

The less sound you hear, the less active the nerves are

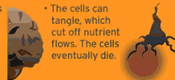
The less active the nerves are, the less active your brain becomes

*"We listen
with our ears
but hear with
our brains"*

George Gates, M.D
Hearing Expert at
University of Washington

Dangers of an Inactive Brain

- Alzheimer's disease leads to nerve cell death and tissue loss throughout the brain. Over time, the brain shrinks dramatically, affecting nearly all its functions.



How You Can Help

If you are concerned about a loved one who is experiencing any of the symptoms mentioned above, talk to a doctor about testing for hearing loss. In several studies, even patients with Alzheimer's showed improved ability to understand and communicate after they were fitted with hearing aids.



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