



**UNDERSTANDING**

**HEARING LOSS**

## WHAT IS HEARING LOSS?

Hearing loss is the partial or complete inability to hear sounds from one or both ears. Typically, hearing loss is gradual, although trauma to the ear can cause sudden hearing loss. There are two main types of hearing loss: **conductive hearing loss** and **sensorineural hearing loss**.

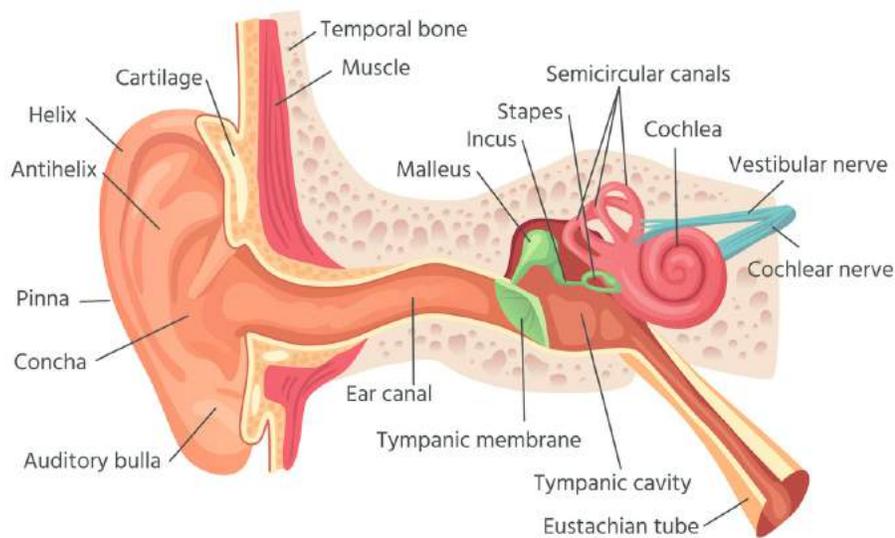
### Did You Know?

- Approximately 15% of American adults aged 18 and over report some trouble hearing.
- Almost half the people in the United States older than age 65 have some degree of hearing loss.
- Men are almost twice as likely as women to have hearing loss.
- Aging and chronic exposure to loud noise greatly contribute to hearing loss.
- Among adults aged 70 and older with hearing loss who could benefit from hearing aids, fewer than 30% has ever used them.



## HOW DOES HEARING WORK?

There are three parts to the ear: the outer ear, middle ear and inner ear. Sound waves enter the outer ear and travel through the ear canal to the tympanic membrane (eardrum). The eardrum and three small bones of the middle ear (malleus, incus and stapes) amplify the vibrations as they travel to the inner ear. There, the vibrations pass through fluid in the inner ear (cochlea). Thousands of tiny hairs attached to the nerve cells of the cochlea help translate sound vibrations into electrical signals that are transmitted to your brain. Your brain turns these signals into sound.



### Effects of Hearing Loss Include:

- Muffled hearing
- Sudden or steady loss of hearing
- Full or "stuffy" sensation in the ear
- Dizziness
- Drainage in the ear
- Pain or tenderness in the ear



## TYPES OF HEARING LOSS

### Conductive Hearing Loss

Conductive hearing loss occurs when sounds aren't able to travel from the outer ear to the eardrum and the bones of the middle ear. Conductive hearing loss isn't always permanent, and in most cases, hearing can be improved.

Conductive hearing loss can be caused by:

- Ear infections
- Allergies
- Swimmer's ear
- A buildup of wax in the ear
- A foreign body in the ear
- Bone lesions
- Ear defects

### Sensorineural Hearing Loss

Sensorineural hearing loss occurs when there is damage to tiny hair cells in the cochlea and/or the auditory nerve. Sound vibrations reach the cochlea, but damaged hair cells can't translate the sound vibrations into the electrical signals that are transmitted to your brain.

Sensorineural hearing loss can be caused by:

- Aging
- Damage to the ear from loud noise
- Head or ear trauma
- Autoimmune inner ear disease
- Ménière's disease
- Central nervous disease
- Ear malformation
- Tumor

## CHILDREN AND HEARING

In the United States, most babies are screened for hearing at birth, and screening continues throughout early development. Children who do not pass a screening test or who exhibit signs of hearing loss should be evaluated by an audiologist or ear, nose and throat physician, as hearing loss can significantly affect a child's ability to develop communication, language, and social skills.

**About 2 to 3 out of every 1,000 children in the United States are born with a detectable level of hearing loss in one or both ears.**

Children may exhibit hearing loss through the following behaviors:

- Can't understand what people are saying
- Doesn't respond or responds with incorrect information
- Speaks differently than other children of the same age
- Turns up the volume on electronic devices or hold them close to the ear
- Has speech or language delays
- Watches others in order to imitate their responses and reactions
- Complains of ear pain, earaches or noises
- Says "what?" or "huh?" often
- Watches a speaker's face very intently (lip reading)



# PROTECT YOUR HEARING

Age and exposure to very loud noises are two major contributors to hearing loss. While we can't control the natural aging process, we can control our exposure to noise. Noise is measured in decibels (dB). Long or repeated exposure to sounds at or above 85 dB can cause hearing loss by damaging the nerve cells that translate sound waves into sound.

Tips for protecting your hearing include:

- Know which noises are at or above 85 dB and limit your exposure to them.
- Wear earplugs or other protective devices when exposed to loud noise.
- If you can't reduce the noise or protect yourself from it, move away from it.
- Have your hearing tested on a regular basis if you are frequently exposed to loud noise.
- Get treatment for ear infections, which can cause permanent damage to the ear if left untreated.

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## SOUND LEVELS OF COMMON NOISES

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Decibels

140+

Fireworks, firearms

120

Ambulance siren

115

Sandblasting

110

Chainsaw, jackhammer, rock concert

100

Snowmobile

95

Snowblower, motorcycle

85

Heavy city traffic

75

Dishwasher

60

Normal conversation

40

Refrigerator

30

Whisper

15% of people ages 20 to 69 have experienced hearing loss due to loud noise.

## TREATMENT OF HEARING LOSS

Depending on the cause and severity of hearing loss, treatments can include removal of ear wax or foreign objects, treating an infection with antibiotics, surgery, hearing aids, cochlear implants and a combination of speech therapy or assistive listening devices.

## FLORIDA GULF COAST ENT & FLORIDA GULF COAST HEARING CENTER FOR YOUR HEARING HEALTH

Florida Gulf Coast ENT offers a full-service hearing center located onsite at our three locations. The experienced and skilled audiologists at the Florida Gulf Coast Hearing Center conduct highly specialized hearing and vestibular testing and offer cutting-edge treatments for all forms of hearing loss and hearing disorders.

Working together, our team of physicians and audiologists will perform a thorough exam and testing to determine your specific diagnosis and treatment options. Our unique combination of ear, nose and throat physicians and highly trained hearing specialists make our practice the optimal care provider for your hearing health.





We proudly offer exceptional compassionate service that includes a full spectrum of adult and pediatric diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical services for problems involving hearing, sinus and throat.

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