

NC Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Hearing Loss Awareness Month

May 2022

Overview of Hearing Loss

- In North Carolina, 1.2 million people ages 18 and older have hearing loss.
- Research indicates untreated hearing loss increases the risk of falling and developing dementia.
- A few health comorbidities of hearing loss include diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, and depression.
- People over the age of 50 and those with serious health conditions should have regular professional hearing evaluations.
- Excessive noise and certain medications can increase the risk of hearing loss
- Hearing loss has been linked to loneliness and social isolation for adults of all ages
- The use of telehealth & its increasing use continues to pose challenges for those with hearing loss
- Hearing loss is the leading combat-related disability among military veterans



Social Isolation & Loneliness

- Research shows that untreated hearing loss in adults is linked with:

Social Isolation

Loneliness

- Isolation is also a common issue among older adults (U.S. age 50-80) with research from [June 2020 reporting](#) that 56% of older adults reported feeling isolated from others.
- Situations that can lead to isolation:

Struggling with conversation in noisy environments

Inability to participate in once pleasurable activities

Lack of participation due to fear of embarrassment

Not seeking medical attention due to misunderstanding

Poor interactions with family/friends

Anything consisting of verbal presentation

SOURCES: 1.(Acuity Hearing Solutions et al., 2020), 4.(Bott & Saunders, 2021) 10.(Kramer et al., 2002) , 11.(Mick et al., 2014), 13.(Pronk et al., 2011), 14.(Strawbridge et al., 2000), 16.(Untreated Hearing Loss Linked To Loneliness And Isolation For Seniors, 2019)

Positive Effects of Hearing Interventions

Hearing Interventions: Hearing aids, Cochlear Implants, & Group Audiological Rehabilitation



Effective in decreasing social isolation & loneliness

SOURCE: 1. (Acuity Hearing Solutions et al., 2020), 2. (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2012), 4.(Bott & Saunders, 2021), 5. (Dawes et al., 2015), 8. (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, n.d.), 9. (Kim, 2017), 12. (Paglialonga et al., 2018)

Prevention of Isolation & Loneliness

Regular assessment of hearing

- This determines your hearing ability and if you have hearing loss

Proper treatment of hearing loss

- This could be removing a wax blockage, hearing aids, cochlear implants, or surgery

Appropriate amplification & fitting

- Devices such as hearing aids amplify sounds to louder levels & require a hearing health professional to program them for individual use

Audiologic Rehabilitation

- Helps you to learn to hear again

Support of family & friends

- Having support can help you be successful with your treatment

Ongoing hearing health support

- Regular audiology follow-up appointments to care for your hearing health and equipment

SOURCE: 1. (Acuity Hearing Solutions et al., 2020), 3. (Bethell et al., 2021), 6. (Ejiri et al., 2019), 7. (Firm, 2019), 15. (Tovah M. Wax, Ph.D., LCSW, 2019)

Telehealth: What You Need to Know

The use of telehealth is increasing and poses challenges for those who are hard of hearing. Below are a few tips for ensuring communication access

- **Know your rights:** Communication access is a human right and is covered under the [ADA](#), [504 Rehabilitation Act](#), and [Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act](#)
- **Know what accommodations you need:** Before you schedule an appointment, be aware of how communication will work best between you and your healthcare provider.
- **Take Action** by requesting accommodations as soon as you schedule the appointment and follow up a few days before to confirm.

Telehealth: Tips for Communication Access

Accommodation Examples

- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) Captioning
- Assistive Listening Devices
- Ask provider to change tone or rate of speech as needed
- Writing back and forth
- Use the chat feature within the video platform
- Gestures
- Have a person there to support you
- Use of captioned telephones (to call in for appointment audio)
- Sign language interpreter
- Any other accommodation you may need

Telehealth Appointment

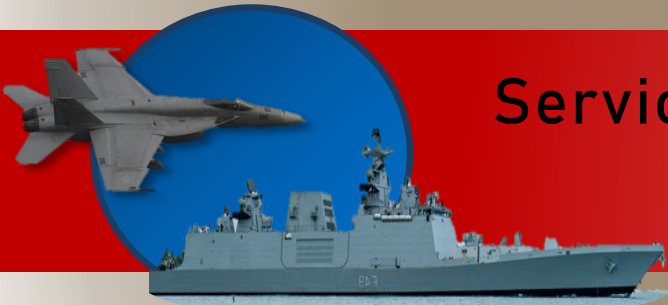
- Inform the provider
 - That you have hearing loss & how best to communicate with you
 - That you will need to see their face while speaking
 - If you will need additional time to respond due to the accommodations being used
- Eliminate/reduce any background noise & have good lighting
- Pick a quiet & private location for the appointment
- Ask the provider to rephrase when necessary
- Let the provider know right away if there is a communication need



**4.6
Million**

**Veterans Are Deaf or
Have Hearing Loss**

Know the Facts



**Service-Related Hearing Loss Is an
Invisible Wound**

Take Action



**Seek Assistance
Don't Suffer In Silence**

**[Click to Visit
NC DSDHH](#)**

Reference: [Dept. of Veterans Affairs](#)

Hearing Loss Resources

- For additional information & services regarding hearing loss, contact your local [DSDHH Regional Center](#)
- DSDHH hearing loss resources related to COVID-19: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/materials-resources/videos-asl-captions>
- [HLAA hearing loss resources related to COVID-19](#)
- [Veterans Hearing Loss Resources](#)
- For information on programs and agencies that improve community health: [Healthy Aging NC](#)

Check us out on Facebook:



Check out our website:



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