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:

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<tr>
<th>Struggling with conversation in noisy environments</th>
<th>Inability to participate in once pleasurable activities</th>
<th>Lack of participation due to fear of embarrassment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not seeking medical attention due to misunderstanding</td>
<td>Poor interactions with family/friends</td>
<td>Anything consisting of verbal presentation</td>
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Positive Effects of Hearing Interventions

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

Effective in decreasing social isolation & loneliness

## Prevention of Isolation & Loneliness

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Prevention Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regular assessment of hearing</td>
<td>• This determines your hearing ability and if you have hearing loss</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proper treatment of hearing loss</td>
<td>• This could be removing a wax blockage, hearing aids, cochlear implants, or surgery</td>
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<td>Appropriate amplification &amp; fitting</td>
<td>• Devices such as hearing aids amplify sounds to louder levels &amp; require a hearing health professional to program them for individual use</td>
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<td>Audiologic Rehabilitation</td>
<td>• Helps you to learn to hear again</td>
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<td>Support of family &amp; friends</td>
<td>• Having support can help you be successful with your treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing hearing health support</td>
<td>• Regular audiology follow-up appointments to care for your hearing health and equipment</td>
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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

Service-Related Hearing Loss Is an Invisible Wound

Seek Assistance Don’t Suffer In Silence

Reference: Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Hearing Loss Resources

- For additional information & services regarding hearing loss, contact your local DSDHH Regional Center
- 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

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