

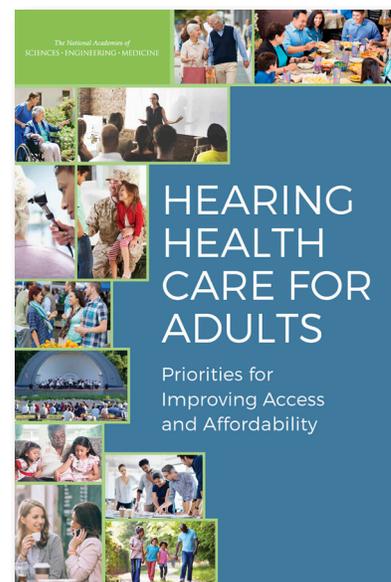
Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability

AN ACTION
GUIDE FOR
INDIVIDUALS
AND
FAMILIES

Hearing is a vital human sense that is important to communication and health and can affect quality of life. Our ability to hear helps us communicate with others and develop and maintain our relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. When someone experiences hearing loss, it can affect many aspects of everyday life. It also can be associated with serious health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, as well as dementia, reduced mobility, and falls.

The attitudes and beliefs of spouses, partners, family members, and friends can help or hurt when it comes to how individuals with hearing loss respond to that hearing loss. When family and friends have positive attitudes and beliefs, people with hearing loss may be more likely to seek help for hearing loss and use hearing aids effectively—while negative attitudes of loved ones may hinder action. The support of others, especially loved ones, matters and can have a meaningful effect on the attitudes and beliefs of the individual with hearing loss, which in turn can promote action.

A new report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine says that there are many steps that individuals and families can take to support hearing health and effective communication. When people take action and become familiar with the full range of available options for managing hearing loss, it can increase opportunities for individuals with hearing loss to maximize their communication abilities and help ensure they have every opportunity to thrive.



Study Sponsors

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Department of Defense

Department of Veterans Affairs

Food and Drug Administration

Hearing Loss Association of America

National Institute on Aging

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

FOR MORE RESOURCES AND TO READ THE FULL REPORT, VISIT www.nas.edu/hearing

Improving communication in the workplace

Communication is essential in the vast majority of jobs. Employers can take actions to create work environments that foster effective communication for people with hearing loss, and people with hearing loss can take actions to help ensure that they have the tools they need to communicate in the workplace.

Some auditory rehabilitation programs include instruction on assertiveness and communication strategies that can be applied to the workplace. The Americans with Disabilities Act affords protections for individuals with hearing loss in the workplace in terms of making reasonable accommodations and not allowing discrimination. State vocational rehabilitation programs also offer resources to those who are eligible and are seeking employment. Many of these resources and protections also extend to educational institutions.

Do you know someone experiencing hearing loss?

Strategies to enhance communication

STRATEGY	RATIONALE
<i>Speak face-to-face</i>	When the speaker's face is turned toward the listener, there is improved signal-to-noise ratio, and the listener uses facial cues to fill in the gaps that he/she may not have heard.
<i>Reduce background noise</i>	The ability to understand speech in the presence of background noise or distractors (e.g., television or restaurant noise) declines as we age, even for older adults without hearing loss.
<i>Speak slower, instead of louder</i>	When someone speaks loudly or shouts, it actually distorts the speech, often making it more difficult to understand. Also, shouting can make both the speaker and the listener more stressed.
<i>State the topic</i>	By making the topic of conversation clear at the beginning, the listener can more effectively use context cues to fill in the gaps.
<i>Rephrase the statement</i>	Repeating oneself becomes frustrating for the speaker and the listener. When the question or statement is rephrased, the listener has more context cues to fill in the gaps. In addition, some words are actually easier to hear, depending on the person's hearing loss and the frequencies of the sounds in the word.

SOURCES: Adapted from Mamo et al. (2016) and Marrone et al. (2012).

Actions YOU can take to promote hearing health

1

Be aware of difficulties in hearing and communication, and **monitor changes**. If you have concerns about your hearing, **talk to a health care provider**.

2

Learn more about the range of **services and technologies** available for hearing loss.

Services include:

- evaluation and diagnosis, including a functional communication assessment;
- selection, fitting, adjustment, and maintenance of hearing aids and other technologies; **and**
- auditory rehabilitation.

Technologies include:

- hearing aids;
- hearing assistive technologies, including products that connect with other communications technologies (like phones and television); **and**
- over-the-counter wearable hearing devices (a new category recommended by the committee; not yet available).

3

Find **peer-support groups and information** for those living with **hearing loss**. See the next page for some **examples of online resources**.

4

Reduce exposure to noise that is at **high volume levels** for extended periods of time, and **use hearing protection** as appropriate.



Examples of online resources for adults with hearing loss and their families

CONSUMER AND PATIENT ORGANIZATIONS

Action on Hearing Loss

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

American Cochlear Implant Alliance

www.acialliance.org

Association of Late-Deafened Adults

www.alda.org

Better Hearing Australia

www.betterhearingaustralia.org.au

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

www.chha.ca/chha

Hearing Link

www.hearinglink.org

Hearing Loss Association of America

www.hearingloss.org

National Association of the Deaf

www.nad.org

TDI (formerly Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing)

www.tdiforaccess.org

U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Americans with Disabilities Act information

www.ada.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise

Department of Defense Hearing Center of Excellence

www.hearing.health.mil

Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration

www.rsa.ed.gov

Department of Veterans Affairs

www.research.va.gov/topics/hearing.cfm

Federal Communications Commission

www.fcc.gov/consumer-and-governmental-affairs/about-bureau/disability-rights-office/general/disabilities

Federal Trade Commission

www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0168-buying-hearing-aid

Food and Drug Administration

www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/ConsumerProducts/HearingAids/default.htm

National Institute on Aging

www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/hearing-loss

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

www.nidcd.nih.gov

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Academy of Doctors of Audiology

www.audiologist.org/patient-resources

American Academy of Audiology

www.howsyourhearing.org

American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery

www.entnet.org/content/patient-health

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

www.asha.org/public/hearing/hearing-loss

International Hearing Society

www.ihinfo.org/IhsV2/Hearing_Health_Info/Index.cfm

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AARP

www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/hearing-resource-center

Consumer Reports Hearing Aids Guide

www.consumerreports.org/cro/hearing-aids/buying-guide.htm

Mayo Clinic

www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hearing-loss/basics/definition/con-20027684

World Health Organization

www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en

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