



Living with Hearing Loss

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DC Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America

Hearing Loss Association of America

- The HLAA mission is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, advocacy, and support.
- Headquartered in Bethesda MD HLAA's national network includes about 130 local chapters nationwide, 16 state/local organizations

Hearing Loss Association of America -- DC Chapter

- Meets at the Tenleytown library to:
 - **Provide support & up-to-date information** on living with hearing loss
 - **Offer a comfortable, informal environment** for those with hearing loss, their families and friends to exchange information & socialize
- *Advocates* for the provision of hearing support, e.g.:
 - Hearing assistance technology in public places
 - Compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act

What We Are Here to Talk About

- **Signs** and **impacts** of HL – signs aren't obvious; HL is invisible; & people don't discuss
- How **to contend** with hearing loss
 - Use of hearing aids and other **devices**
 - Communications **strategies**
 - **Tips** for home & for common social situations
 - Available **resources**
 - American with Disabilities Act -- Regulations and Guidelines
 - Where to get help

Who Has Hearing Loss?

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number (in millions)</u>
12-19	2.3	0.76
20-29	3.2	1.2
30-39	5.4	2.3
40-49	12.9	5.6
50-59	28.5	9.6
60-69	44.9	9.5
70-79	68.1	10.8
80+	89.1	8.3
TOTAL		48.1

Source: Archives of Internal Medicine, 11/14/2011

Recognition, Denial, & Avoidance

- Only 14 – 33 % of people who need them actually use HAs
- On average, people with HL wait 8 years before purchasing a 1st set of HAs; **Why?**
 - **Recognition** – HL often not recognized due to gradual onset
 - **Denial & Avoidance** – I don't have a problem; I hear well in some settings; others mumble, speak softly or too fast; nothing can be done about hearing loss
 - **Why do people deny/avoid?**
 - **Stigma** – I don't want to stand out or look old
 - **Cost** – Hearing aids & care are expensive (more on this later)

Why Early Recognition & Treatment Are Important

Studies have linked untreated hearing loss to:

- Irritability, negativism & anger
- Fatigue, tension, stress, anxiety & depression
- Avoidance or withdrawal from social situations, resulting in isolation & loneliness
- Diminished psychological & social health
- Correlation between hearing loss & diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, dementia

It's Invisible. How Can I Tell if I/Someone Has a Hearing Loss?

- *A hard of hearing person:*
 - Often asks people to repeat/rephrase what they say?
 - Has trouble hearing in groups?
 - Thinks others mumble?
 - Fails to hear someone talking from behind them?
 - Turns up the volume on the TV or radio?
 - Dreads going to noisy parties and restaurants?
 - Has a wife/husband/friend who thinks so?

Why Hearing is Hard – It's Not Just You

In addition to problems with your hearing it may be:

- Problems with the **speaker** – speaks softly, rapidly, with accent; hides mouth
- Problems with the **environment**
 - **Distance** from the source -- loudness & clarity of speech fade rapidly as it travels over distance
 - **Noise** -- For optimum hearing, speech should be at least 20–25 decibels (dB) louder than any competing noise
 - Poor **acoustics** -- reverberations /echoes

Misconceptions

My hearing loss cannot be helped

- Actually, most people with HL *can* be helped with hearing aids. Still others can be helped medically.

http://betterhearing.org/hearing_loss/myths_about_hearing_loss/index.cfm

Hearing Loss is just a problem for the elderly

- Actually, over ½ of people with HL are younger than 65

People with HL aren't very bright (or nice)

- We may miss something, respond inappropriately (or not at all); that doesn't mean we are dull, or nasty



More Misconceptions

- **Everyone with HL uses sign language –**
actually only about 0.5 – 4.0 % do

- **Shout & you will be heard --**

- *Shouting Won't Help: Why I &
50 Million Other Americans*



Can't Hear You, Katherine Bouton

- **Hearing Aids & cochlear implants restore
normal hearing – very useful, but no ☹️**

Taking Charge

- Time to visit the professionals
 - Ear, nose, throat doctor (Otolaryngologist or otologist)
 - to rule out a medical condition, including ear wax, virus, or other medically treatable condition
 - Audiologist --
 - For a full hearing evaluation
 - To purchase a hearing aid* &/or aural rehabilitation

*Purchasing a Hearing Aid: A Consumer Checklist

<http://www.hearingloss.org/learn/docs/HLAAHearingAidChecklist.pdf>

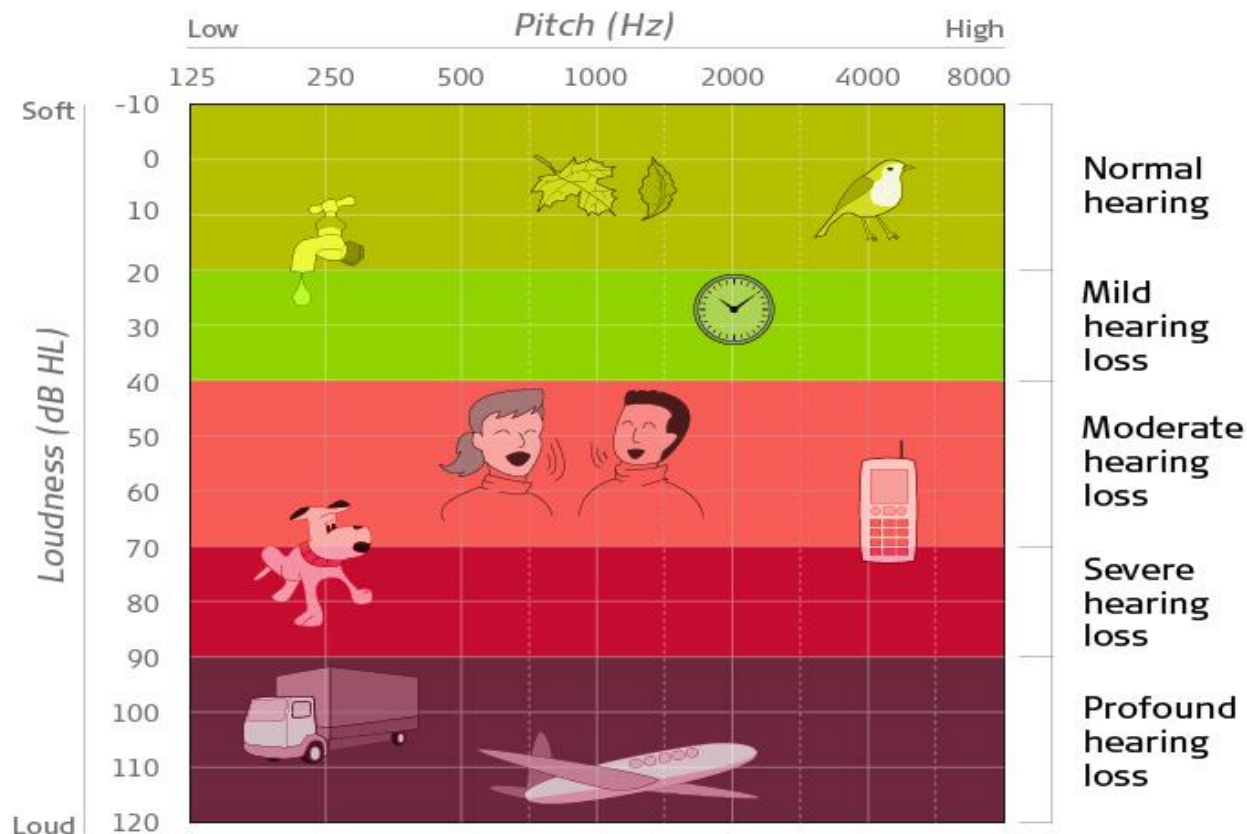
Hearing Screening -- Definition

- A quick test to see how well you hear different sounds. You either pass or fail the screening. If you pass, you probably do not need to do anything else. If you fail, you need more testing to see if you have a hearing loss, and what type.

Hearing Screening – How is it Done?

- Most commonly by Pure Tone Testing:
 - You are tested to find the quietest sound you can hear at different pitches, or frequencies.
 - Generally uses earphones that lets the sounds go to one ear at a time.
 - Does not indicate whether you can understand speech at any given pitch & loudness level.

How is Hearing Loss Measured



Hearing Screening – Where to Have it Done?

- A doctor
- A health fair
- On-line – Beltone, Phonak, Widex, etc.
- Costco
- Lyons Club
- CVS Hearing Center
- Other

Visiting an Audiologist – What to Expect

- Interview
 - What hearing challenges do you have?
 - Is there a medical problem?; should you be referred to a ENT or other specialist?

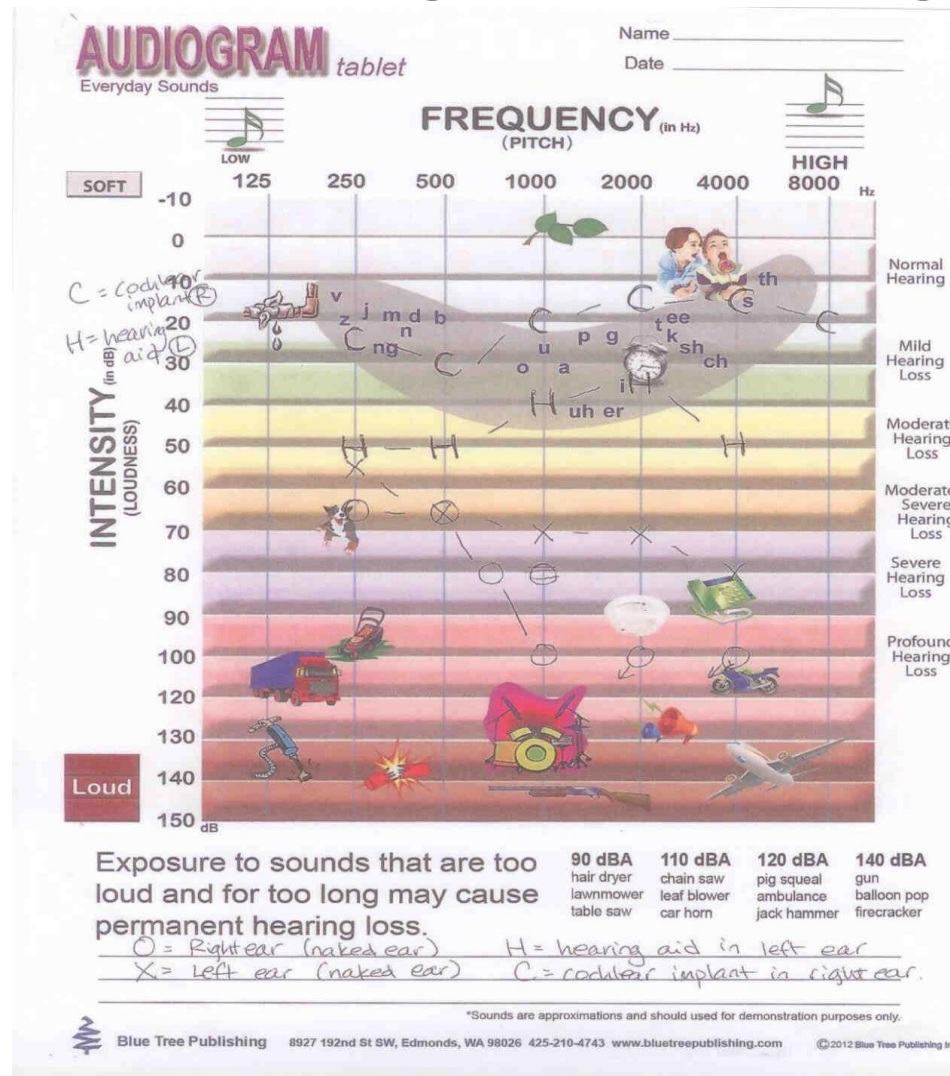
Hearing Evaluation – Testing

- **Air conduction:** at different frequencies, how loud does a sound need to be for you to hear it
- **Bone conduction:** test to see whether your ears properly conduct sound
- **Speech reception/discrimination:** adjusting frequency & loudness; do you recognize what is being said
- **Threshold of comfort & discomfort:** measures range of comfortable hearing (soft to loud)
- **Impedance:** measures ability of your eardrum to reflect sound

The Outcome

- An audiogram, and if indicated:
 - Strategies for living with hearing loss
 - Recommendation for hearing aids
 - Referral to an ENT or other medical specialist.

Understanding Your Audiogram



The Nation's Voice for People with Hearing Loss

Russ' Audiogram



my audiogram.pdf



Hearing Aids

- What you need to know: it's not just the hearing aids; they need to be programmed for you & you alone
- Hearing aids are sophisticated devices that **amplify** sound & can include **accessories** to:
 - Make television listening clearer & comfortable
 - Reduce surrounding noise in restaurants, family gatherings and other noisy environments
 - Enhance telephone communication
 - Connect to various sound sources
 - Each brand & model includes different capabilities

What Hearing Aids Will Not Do

- Hearing aids without additional devices extending their functionality will not:
 - Overcome noisy environments – even directional mics pick up more than you want to hear
 - Overcome distance between speaker & listener
 - Provide a directional sense for a sound source – where is that ambulance??
 - Eliminate echoes in hard surfaced rooms
 - Overcome difficult accents

Why are Hearing Aids Expensive

- Listening Options (standard, comfort, music, TV,...)
- Accessory Options (Remote control, microphones, wireless TV links,...)
- Fine tuning/customization options – HAs are programmed for you & you alone (but can be reprogrammed); they are not mass produced
- Technical sophistication options (directionality, auto coordination between aids,...)
- High research & development costs (but small market)
- Testing & follow-on support services often included in the price of the device (bundling)
- Limited competition – only 6 major manufacturers

Which Hearing Aid is Right for Me?



- Assess your needs – working environment, home & social requirements – **you need to be actively involved in testing & deciding**
- NOTE -- Aids are usually returnable for a 30 day period; try them out in a variety of situations
- Be aware that a personal adjustment period is usually required
- Periodically reassess your hearing & needs

Communication Strategies

If you are hard of hearing:

- Speak up – **ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF**
- Let others know that they can't turn away from you
- Ask others to face you, speak at a moderate rate,
- Ask that they not shout, & repeat (or better rephrase) when needed
- Admit when you don't hear, i.e. don't bluff – bluffing doesn't work well & can be embarrassing
- Don't encourage communication from others who are beyond your hearing range



Communication Strategies, Continued

- Be patient –the habits of your communication partners have been built up many years; they are hard to change
- Corollary of above: Be prepared to repeat requests often
- Ask communication partner to rephrase – better than repeating
- Ask that they tell you when they are changing the subject

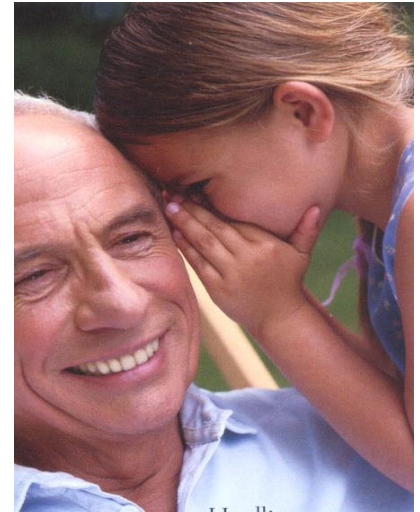
Communication Strategies – yet more

- Accept that the world will not fully adapt to your HL
- Consider changes to improve communication at home & work place – e.g. carpeting, drapes, acoustic tile, loop your TV
- Use personal microphones, assistive hearing & alerting devices, amplified or captioned telephones

Communication Tips

When speaking to someone with a hearing loss:

- Get the person's attention first
- Face the person when you are talking to
- Whenever possible reduce background interference from TV's or radios
- Speak at a moderate rate; don't shout
- Rephrase if repeating doesn't work



Hearing Assistive Technology



- **Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)** bring the sound directly to your ear, mitigating the impact of distance, noise and poor acoustics
- **Alerting devices** provide visual &/or tactile alerts to augment your hearing: visual fire alarms, visual doorbell signals, vibrating alarm



Using a Telephone



- Amplified phones
- Captioned services or phones
- Neck loops or bluetooth to connect cell phones to hearing aids
- Smartphones with SMS/email
- Use hearing aid compatible cell and smartphones
 - <http://www.accesswireless.org/Home.aspx>



TV and Home Stereo

- Turn television captions on. Virtually all TVs have them
- Loop your TV listening area or use a neck loop, or other device
- Wireless headphones



Tips for a Restaurant

- Lighting - pick a well lit area
- Background sounds -- find/ask for a quiet section
- Face the person you most want to talk to
- Go at off hours
- Contribute to apps on hearing in restaurants
- Request written specials, bring pen & paper
- Too noisy? Pick another restaurant



Theater & Movies Support

- Headsets/neckloops are widely available
- Closed Captioning devices are often provided
- Look for open-captioned showings
- Looping is available at some theater performances (Folger?)
- DVDs, Internet frequently includes captioning options

Care and use of Hearing Aids

- Hearing Aid users should wear them at least 8 hours per day
- Users should have their own simple cleaning tools – they usually come with hearing aids
- Battery check, cup aid in hand (use gloves) – should whistle

Care & Use of HAs -- Continued

- Note battery size used; replace batteries correctly – they should fit easily; don't force
- Try to ensure aids are in a drying box at night; this will extend the life of the aids significantly
- Drying desiccant boxes must be renewed every 2 months or according to product requirements

Care & Use – Part 3

- Wax traps must be cleaned & filters replaced about every 2 months
- Vents should be free of wax accumulation
- To reduce the possibility of itching in the ear dampen a cloth with cleaner or peroxide & wipe at least weekly
- Back up aids should be stored in a dry place



For More Information:

Hearing Loss Association of America

www.hearingloss.org

Hearing Loss Association – DC Chapter

www.hlaadc.org

www.facebook.com/groups/hladc

HLADCchapter@gmail.com