

# WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS?

## FACT SHEET

Hearing loss is one of the most common health conditions, affecting one-in-six Australians. The rate rises among older Australians – nearly three out of four people over the age of 70 have hearing loss.

You might not realise you have hearing loss, because it is invisible. This means you can't see hearing loss in another person. However, you can see signs of it. A person with a hearing loss may show the following signs:

- Asks for repeats or clarification frequently
- Mishears detail
- Answers incorrectly or unexpectedly
- Conversation dominance/avoidance
- Difficulty hearing in noisy environments
- Avoidance of group discussion
- Frustration or fatigue

Do you know anybody who is always complaining that "other people are always mumbling"?

Our hearing for high pitched sounds is more sensitive to the effects of ageing and noise damage. An example of a high-pitched sound is the voice of a young child. Low pitch is a deeper sound, like a man's voice. Words have high- and low-pitch sounds in them. People with hearing loss often find that they can hear the low-pitch, deeper sounds in words, but miss the high-pitch sounds. When that happens, people miss the meaning of the words because they only hear parts of them. If you lose your hearing for high-pitch sounds, conversations can sound like people are mumbling

or not speaking clearly. Just turning the volume (sound) up is often not helpful for people with this kind of hearing loss, because volume alone doesn't solve the problem. It would be like turning up the brightness in a blurry picture. The picture is still blurry, but brighter.

Let's say you have a hearing condition that starts out gradually, what are some of the first signs that you might notice?

- You might find that higher pitched voices, namely women's voices and children's voices, are harder to understand.
- You might have stopped hearing high pitched nature noises like birds chirping
- You might struggle with hearing the high pitched consonants like 's' and 'f' and 'th'
- You might have a sense of the problem being not so much about volume, but about clarity – you can hear people, you just can't always understand them.
- You might find people often accuse you of having 'selective hearing' because your hearing for some sounds is ok, but not for others
- You might find that it sounds to you like everybody is 'mumbling' when they speak
- You might find that you need to turn the volume of the TV or radio up louder than others in order to hear

### ADDRESS

1 Hamilton Place  
Mount Waverley  
Vic 3149

### HEARING LINE

**1300 242 842**

For hearing, social & emotional support, & general enquiries, Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

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“ ”

It was a rude awakening I have to say...I was on a holiday with a friend, sharing a room, and she kept telling me to turn the TV down. But when I did, I couldn't hear what was happening! I didn't want to admit that I had a hearing difficulty. It took me a while to actually come to terms with it and admit that I needed to do something about it – Cornelia

If you suspect you may have a hearing loss, or you suspect someone you care about may have a hearing loss, a good first step is to perform a do-it-yourself hearing screening test. Try one of the two screening tests below. They are free, quick to work through and will tell you whether or not more thorough testing by an audiologist (a hearing specialist) is recommended.

#### HEARING SELF-SCREENING TOOLS

If you want to check your own hearing, there is a web-based hearing screening tool from Hearing Australia: <https://onlineassessment.hearing.com.au>. Alternatively, you can use the mobile application hearing screening tool from the World Health Organisation, available from: <https://www.apple.com/au/app-store> (Apple) or <https://play.google.com/store> (Google Play).

This factsheet is intended to be a guide of a general nature, having regard to general circumstances. The information presented should not be relied on as a substitute for medical advice, independent judgement or assessment by a healthcare professional, with consideration of the particular needs and individual circumstances. This factsheet reflects information available at the time of its preparation, but its currency should be determined having regard to other available information. Soundfair disclaims all liability to users of the information provided.

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Author: Natalie Fletcher

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