

# WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF HEARING CONDITIONS?

## FACT SHEET

Hearing conditions are not simply about having trouble hearing. There can be many important follow-on effects.

The impacts of living with a hearing condition touch on:

- A person's quality of life
- Their social life and relationships
- Their mental and emotional health
- Their overall physical health

### SOCIAL LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Social withdrawal means a person feels less connected and less socially active, and it can result in a loss or reduction in social skills. Hearing loss can lead to social withdrawal. It may cause a loss of enjoyment from being with others, and it has a huge impact on relationships. Hearing loss can reduce a person's social networks, both personal and professional.

### MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Hearing conditions can have a major effect on mental and emotional health too. People with hearing loss and/or tinnitus are more likely to be depressed, lonely or anxious.

Hearing loss can lead to frustration and low mood because of constantly having to ask people to repeat what they've said. It can lead to fatigue (being tired) due to increased 'listening effort' and the need to concentrate harder on what others are saying.

There is evidence to show that hearing loss increases the risk of cognitive decline. This means a person may not be as 'sharp thinking' as they used to be. Work and school performance can suffer too, if appropriate supports are not put in place.

There is also the social stigma to deal with – denial, embarrassment, and poor self-esteem. There are also other people's perceptions of the person with hearing loss's mental sharpness. Studies show that many people with hearing conditions have negative feelings about their hearing, such as feeling ashamed to admit it to other people. Many people know about their hearing loss for many years before finally reaching out for help. People put it off for a long time.

So, you can see that there are many consequences of hearing loss, which go well beyond the actual inability to hear certain sounds.

### WHY ARE THERE SUCH WIDE-REACHING IMPACTS?

Hearing is essential to the most common forms of communication. Communication is essential to our ability to live as social creatures, connecting with others around us. Our primary means of communicating with others in our society is via language, through talking and listening. If

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### HEARING LINE

**1300 242 842**

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

### LET'S CONNECT



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“ ”

I think people make fun of those who can't hear properly because the disability has never really been humanised. It's always the subject of jokes. It's associated with growing old and it's not taken seriously – Ala

that process is disrupted, and if we don't have other means of communicating fluently with others (for example, sign language) then that disconnect can have major impacts on our lives.

#### LIVED EXPERIENCES

You may find value in reading real-life stories from a variety of people living with hearing conditions - how they manage their hearing condition day-by-day, how it affects them, how they sought help for their hearing condition and the outcome of their help-seeking efforts.

"At the moment, my hearing has definitely reached a point where it's holding me back socially. I have just given up on going into bigger social groups or to the movies. The last time

I went to the movies, I didn't think it would matter if I didn't hear every word...but I walked out crying after 15 minutes. I definitely won't go back to the movies unless it's captioned" - Andrea.

Soundfair publishes lived experience stories on its website and social media channels, including video stories on YouTube. Soundfair also hosts an online event each month so that people with hearing conditions can connect and swap notes with a community of individuals experiencing similar things.

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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