

# Diabetes and Hearing Loss: 5 Facts You Need to Know

## **1. There is a proven link between diabetes and hearing loss in adults over the age of 60.**

The same microvascular changes which often lead to nephropathy and retinopathy in diabetic patients, can lead to damage to the microstructures of the cochlear. One recent peer reviewed survey<sup>1</sup> indicates that 21% of diabetics had hearing loss, compared to 9% of non-diabetic adults. For diabetic patients over the age of 60 the prevalence of high frequency hearing loss rose to 54%, compared to 32% of non-diabetic adults of similar age.

## **2. Diabetic patients should have their hearing screened when identified with diabetes.**

Given the relationship between diabetes and hearing loss, when patients are identified as diabetic they should have their hearing screened by a licensed professional.

## **3. Diabetic patients can have a progressive hearing loss.**

It's possible that diabetic patients can have normal or near-normal hearing at the time of the initial identification of diabetes, only to suffer from a progressive form of sensorineural hearing loss.<sup>2</sup> Therefore; diabetic patients should have their hearing screened annually.

## **4. Hearing loss of adult onset often contributes to social isolation, cognitive loss and depression.**

Studies indicate that adults with mild to moderate-severe hearing loss are more likely to suffer the effects of social isolation and withdrawal, including depression, cognitive loss and psychosis.<sup>3,4</sup>

## **5. Hearing aids can help.**

A peer reviewed study conducted by the National Council on Aging of over 2000 participants with hearing loss provides evidence of the benefits of hearing aids, including improved overall health, better interpersonal relationships and a reduction in frustration, anxiety and depression.<sup>5</sup>

**The evidence suggests diabetic patients need to have the hearing screened annually.**

### **References**

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4. Lin F. et al (2011). Hearing loss prevalence and risk factors among older adults in the United States. *Journal of Gerontology*. 66A, 5, 582-590.

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