

Stress Management and Hearing Health

Hearing loss ranks as the third most prevalent disability in the US. Hearing loss negatively impacts individuals and society in a number of ways. The World Health Organization estimates approximately one-third of hearing losses are caused by preventable factors. Recent research indicates that one such factor, stress and an inability to manage it effectively, is related to hearing loss.

3 facts about the relationship between stress management and hearing health.

#1

Stress worsens tinnitus (ringing in the ears)

A 2025 University College London study investigated critical life stressors—such as bereavement, job loss, or major illness—and their relationship with tinnitus onset or severity. Individuals experiencing more stressful life events were significantly more likely to report tinnitus. (McKenna & Vogt, 2025).

#2

Hearing loss is often a chronic stressor when left untreated

Persistent hearing loss contributes to emotional and psychological burden (e.g., depressive symptoms), but can be mitigated with hearing aids and aural rehab. (West, 2017).

#3

Individuals with hearing loss who have strong social support are less stressed

Analyzing waves of the Health and Retirement Study (2006–2014), this longitudinal study showed that hearing impairment acts as a chronic stressor, associated with rising depressive symptoms. Importantly, individuals with strong social support experienced lower depression, though support did not fully buffer the stress—highlighting the complex interplay of hearing loss, stress, and mental health. (Hamrah et al 2024).

KEY POINTS

Social support significantly influence stress responses and may indirectly support hearing health and emotional resilience.

Hearing loss itself acts as a chronic stressor, contributing to mental health issues like depression—highlighting the importance of integrated mental health and hearing care.

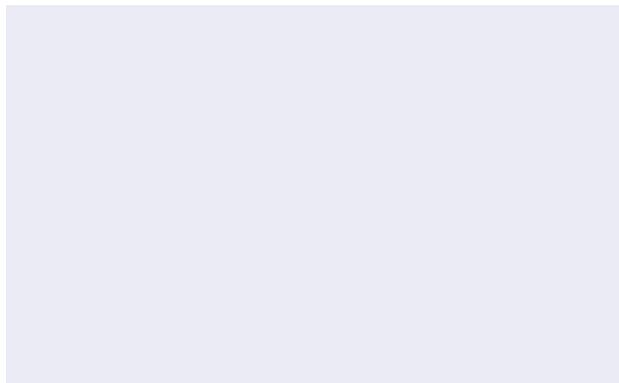
Interventions combining hearing rehabilitation with stress-management strategies or counseling may improve both hearing and emotional outcomes.



Stress Management and Hearing Health (Continued)

ACTIONS

Besides encouraging individuals to manage their stress, individuals over the age of 50 should be encouraged to get a baseline hearing test from an audiologist. [The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery \(AAO-HNS\) recommends that all adults aged 50 and older undergo regular hearing screenings.](#) This recommendation is specifically for those who haven't noticed any issues with their hearing and aims to detect age-related hearing loss early.



References:

Hamrah, M. S., Bartlett, L., Goldberg, L. R., Bindoff, A., & Vickers, J. C. (2024). Hearing loss, social isolation and depression in participants aged 50 years or over in Tasmania, Australia. *Australasian journal on ageing*, 43(4), 692–699.
 McKenna, L., and Vogt, F. Stressful life events and tinnitus. (2025) *HNO* 73, 182–188
 West J. S. (2017). Hearing impairment, social support, and depressive symptoms among U.S. adults: A test of the stress process paradigm. *Social science & medicine*, 192, 94–101.