

Social Connectedness and Hearing Health



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

4 facts about the relationship between social connectedness and hearing health.

#1 Older adults with hearing loss tend to have more difficulty maintaining relationships and participating in activities

This meta-analysis comprised of 41 studies concluded that hearing loss was a significant barrier to social participation and relationship quality. To better promote the social participation of older adults, early detection of hearing loss, holistic assessment, and interprofessional collaboration must be considered. (Prieur Chaintré, et al 2024).

#2 Individuals with hearing loss tend to have weaker social networks

The self-reported hearing loss and social network size of 5888 adults was analyzed. Findings suggest that older adults with hearing problems may be more at -risk for weaker (poorer quality) social networks and depression. (Dobrota et al 2022).

#3 Older individuals with hearing loss tend to have reduced social network sizes

This secondary analysis of a multicenter randomized controlled trial with 3-year follow-up was completed in 2022 and conducted at 4 field sites in the US. Participants included 977 adults (aged 70-84

years who had untreated hearing loss without substantial cognitive impairment) recruited from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities study and newly recruited. Participants were randomized (1:1) to hearing intervention or health education control and followed up every 6 months. Social isolation and loneliness were measured at baseline and at 6 months and 1, 2, and 3 years postintervention. Results showed that hearing intervention (vs health education control) reduced social network size and reduced loneliness. These findings suggest hearing intervention (hearing aids/rehab) is a low-risk strategy that may help promote social connection among older adults. (Reed et al, 2025).

#4 Individuals with hearing loss are more likely to experience loneliness and depressive symptoms

Among 5,948 participants (25-86 years), loneliness was reported by 9.5% of the participants and the prevalence of significant symptoms of depression was 9.9%. The risk of loneliness was found to be significantly higher in participants with severe to complete hearing loss. In addition, the odds ratio (OR) for depressive symptoms was significantly higher in those with a mild to severe hearing loss compared to those with normal hearing. (Doge, et al 2025).



Social Connectedness and Hearing Health (Continued)

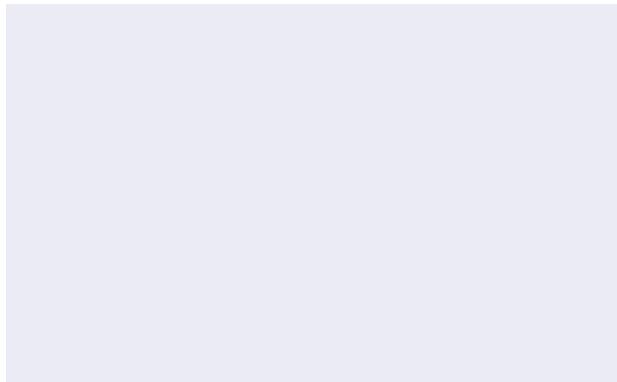
KEY POINTS

Social connectedness, which is a mix of feelings of loneliness as well as the size and quality of social networks is affected by hearing loss. Individuals with hearing loss tend to have greater feelings of loneliness and smaller social networks.

Additionally, there is some evidence that hearing aids improve these conditions (Hori, et al, 2025)

ACTIONS

Besides encouraging individuals to stay socially connected with family, friends and colleagues, 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:

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