

The Negative Consequences of Untreated Hearing Loss: It is Not a Benign Condition



There is an abundance of evidence demonstrating the broad and often underestimated consequences when hearing loss goes untreated.

#1

Communication Disabilities

Primary complaints revolve around difficulty recognizing speech, especially in noisy or challenging listening environments. Conversations in both quiet and noisy conditions are affected. Uncorrected hearing loss also impairs the ability to detect, identify, and localize sounds such as alarms, music, or birdsong—things many people take for granted. This affects both the hearing-impaired person and those around them—for example, family or coworkers—because communication becomes strained.

#2

Quality of Life Impacts (Social and Emotional Consequences)

Individuals with untreated hearing loss frequently experience social isolation, reduced participation in activities, and feelings of exclusion, even loneliness. These psychosocial effects are strongly linked to a higher prevalence of symptoms of depression and generally poorer quality of life.

#3

Cognitive Effects

Research has shown a consistent association between hearing impairment and reduced cognitive function, especially in older adults. Some studies suggest that untreated hearing loss may contribute to cognitive decline, though it's not always clear whether hearing loss causes cognitive loss or both stem from general age-related degeneration.

#4

Early intervention is Important

Treatment (hearing aids) appears to reduce emotional and potentially cognitive risks.

ACTIONS

All 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:

Arlinger S. (2003). Negative consequences of uncorrected hearing loss—a review. *International journal of audiology*, 42 Suppl 2, 2S17–2S20.
 Choi, J. S., Adams, M. E., Crimmins, E. M., Lin, F. R., & Ailshire, J. A. (2024). Association between hearing aid use and mortality in adults with hearing loss in the USA: a mortality follow-up study of a cross-sectional cohort. *The lancet. Healthy longevity*, 5(1), e66–e75.