

WORLD HEARING DAY

Ear and Hearing care for all

World Hearing Day is held on 3 March each year to raise awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care across the world.

Worldwide, about half a billion people (almost 8% of the world's population) have hearing loss. More than 10% of people have some degree of hearing loss that compromises their daily communication, making it the most common sensory disorder.



Adolescents are at risk from excessive exposure to noise, head trauma, or both. Older adults typically experience a progressive decrease in hearing (presbycusis), which is directly related to a combination of aging, noise exposure, and genetic factors.

Hearing loss is defined as one of three types:

- Conductive (involves outer or middle ear)
- Sensorineural (involves inner ear or the nerves related to hearing)
- Mixed (combination of the two)

Aging and chronic exposure to loud noises both contribute to hearing loss. Other factors, such as excessive earwax, can temporarily reduce how well your ears conduct sounds.

Most types of hearing loss can't be reversed. However, you and your doctor or a hearing specialist can take steps to improve what you hear.

Signs and symptoms of hearing loss may include:

- Muffling of speech and other sounds.
- Difficulty understanding words, especially against background noise or in a crowd.
- Trouble hearing consonants.
- Frequently asking others to speak more slowly, clearly, and loudly.
- Needing to turn up the volume of the television or radio.
- Withdrawal from conversations.

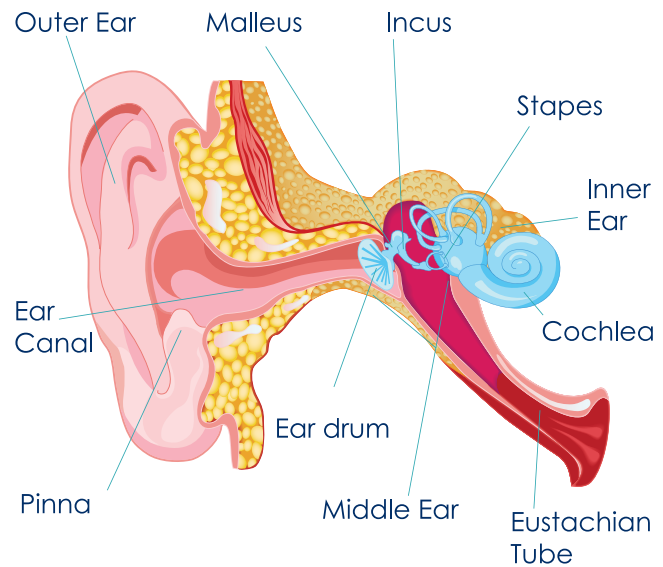
When to see a doctor

If you have a sudden loss of hearing, particularly in one ear, seek immediate medical attention. Talk to your doctor if difficulty hearing is interfering with your daily life. Age-related hearing loss occurs gradually, so you may not notice it at first.

To understand how hearing loss occurs, it can be helpful to first understand how you hear.

How you hear

Your ear consists of three major areas: outer ear, middle ear, and inner ear. Sound waves pass through the outer ear and cause vibrations at the eardrum. The eardrum and three small bones of the middle ear amplify the vibrations as they travel to the inner ear. There, the vibrations pass through fluid in a snail-shaped structure in the inner ear (cochlea). Attached to nerve cells in the cochlea are thousands of tiny hairs that help translate sound vibrations into electrical signals that are transmitted to your brain. Your brain turns these signals into sound.



How hearing loss can occur

Hearing loss can be:

- Congenital (born with it)
- Acquired after trauma, infection, blockage, noise, earwax
- Progressive or sudden
- Temporary or permanent
- Unilateral or bilateral
- Mild or profound

The most common causes of hearing loss overall are the following:

- Cerumen accumulation (earwax)
- Noise
- Aging
- Infections (particularly among children and young adults)

Red flags

Findings of particular concern are:

- Unilateral sensorineural hearing loss
- Abnormalities of cranial nerves (other than hearing loss)
- Rapidly worsening or sudden hearing loss





Risk factors

Factors that may damage or lead to loss of the hairs and nerve cells in your inner ear include:

- **Aging.** Degeneration of inner ear structures occurs over time.
- **Loud noise.** Exposure to loud sounds can damage the cells of your inner ear. Damage can occur with long-term exposure to loud noises, or from a short blast of noise, such as from a gunshot.
- **Heredity.** Your genetic makeup may make you more susceptible to ear damage from sound or deterioration from aging.
- **Occupational noises.** Jobs where loud noise is a regular part of the working environment, such as mining, construction, or factory work, can lead to damage inside your ear.
- **Recreational noises.** Exposure to explosive noises, such as firearms and jet engines, can cause immediate, permanent hearing loss. Other recreational activities with dangerously high noise levels include motorcycling, carpentry or listening to loud music.
- **Some medications.** Drugs such as the antibiotic gentamicin, sildenafil (Viagra) and certain chemotherapy drugs, can damage the inner ear. Temporary effects on your hearing — ringing in the ear (tinnitus) or hearing loss — can occur if you take very high doses of aspirin, other pain relievers, antimalarial drugs, or loop diuretics.
- **Some illnesses.** Diseases or illnesses that result in high fever, such as meningitis, may damage the cochlea.



Prevention

The following steps can help you prevent noise-induced hearing loss and avoid worsening of age-related hearing loss:

- **Protect your ears.** Limiting the duration and intensity of your exposure to noise is the best protection. In the workplace, using the prescribed earplugs or earmuffs can help protect your ears from damaging noise.
- **Have your hearing tested.** Consider regular hearing tests if you work in a noisy environment. If you've lost some hearing, you can take steps to prevent further loss.
- Avoid recreational risks. **Activities such as hunting, using power tools or listening to rock concerts** can damage your hearing over time. Wearing hearing protectors or taking breaks from the noise can protect your ears. Turning down the music volume is helpful too.

If you have any questions, talk to a Platinum Health Healthcare Provider.

Source: www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hearing-loss