

## HOW CAN I **HELP**



# WHEN SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS HARD OF HEARING

Hearing loss doesn't just affect the hearing impaired person themselves - it affects everyone who interacts with them too. While the hearing-impaired person in your life misses out on many things, you too may feel irritation, frustration or even anger.

If you suspect that someone close to you has a hearing problem, there's a lot you can do to help. This booklet describes the signs of hearing loss and ways you can help someone tackle the problem.



HEARING LOSS IS WIDESPREAD



Hearing loss is one of our major health concerns. An estimated 10 percent of the world's population and approximately one third of all seniors over the age of 75 suffer from hearing losses ranging from mild to profound. Some have had the loss since birth; others experienced it following an infection or injury. But for most, hearing problems develop gradually over many years.

Many people do nothing about their hearing loss. Given its usually gradual onset, some are unaware of the problem. Others choose to ignore the potential social or emotional effects of hearing loss. But since hearing is basic to communication, its loss can have a strong impact on human relations.

Hearing loss can also become a safety issue. What happens when someone can't hear approaching cars or a smoke detector? Hearing keeps us in contact with life. Losing it means losing something precious.



# SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS?

If you think someone you know might have a hearing loss, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do they sometimes fail to hear the sound of the phone or doorbell?
2. Do they often ask for words to be repeated?
3. Do they often turn up the TV or radio to levels others find uncomfortable?
4. Do they complain that people around them are mumbling?
5. Have they experienced ringing in their ears?
6. Do they ever ask others to recount details they missed in a meeting?
7. Do they find it hard to follow conversation in a noisy room?
8. Have they suffered significant noise exposure (especially at work)?
9. Do they often speak too loudly?
10. Have they seemed unaccountably depressed?

If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, the person you know might very well have a hearing loss.

# MOST HEARING PROBLEMS CAN BE HELPED

Fortunately, much can be done to assist impaired hearing. In a small percentage of cases, hearing loss is a symptom of illness or obstruction - and can be treated medically. In the vast majority of cases, hearing loss can be significantly improved with hearing instruments.

Today, hearing instruments are highly advanced - and can be very discreet. Because of the digital technology they can be precisely tailored to the needs of individual users. And, for users concerned with cosmetic issues, some models are so small they can be virtually hidden within or behind the ear.

Studies have also shown that adults who wear hearing instruments see significant improvements in other aspects of their lives, including better relationships with others and a more emotionally rewarding social life.

- > HEARING INSTRUMENTS CAN BE VERY DISCREET
- > DENIAL IS A COMMON REACTION TO HEARING LOSS



WHAT YOU  
CAN DO



Try to help your friend or family member recognize their hearing problem by themselves. Suggest that they take a look at a list of hearing loss symptoms. Often this will cause a spark of recognition. The single most important thing you can do is to persuade your friend or family member to get a professional hearing evaluation, either from an audiologist or a qualified hearing instrument dispenser. You might even help by making the hearing evaluation appointment yourself, and going along.

If the individual is reluctant to have their hearing evaluated, it can also be helpful to involve a family physician in the discussion, or a friend who uses hearing instruments. Both can help take the mystery out of hearing loss and how it can be helped.

# YOUR OPINION COUNTS

Even after the hearing evaluation, your support can make a great deal of difference in the weeks to follow. Should your friend or relative be fitted with hearing instruments, your support can be an important factor in making the fitting a success. During the first few weeks after a fitting, hearing instrument use takes practice and patience.

By taking the time to understand the nature of hearing loss and to learn practical ways of dealing with it, you can help the wearer to take the first important steps toward addressing the problem and recapturing much of the joy of hearing.



