



Deaf & Hear
Alberta


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Hearing Loss: More than Just an
Inconvenience. Everything you need to know
about Communicating with Seniors.

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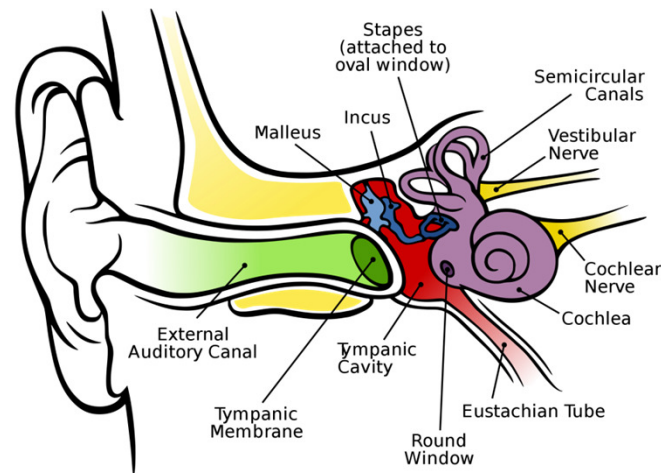


Hearing loss is a disability that frequently goes unnoticed. It is the most common sensory impairment in adults over the age of 65, affecting more than 30 % of Canadians in this age group.



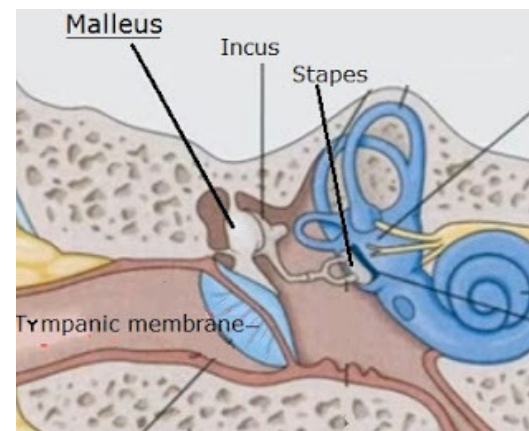
How Does Our Hearing Work?

Sound becomes a mechanical signal as the vibrating ear drum causes three small bones in the middle ear to vibrate.



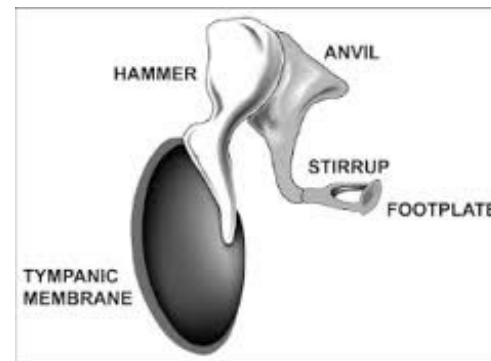
How Does Our Hearing Work?

The malleus (hammer), anvil (incus) and Stirrup (stapes) increase the force of the sound's signal.



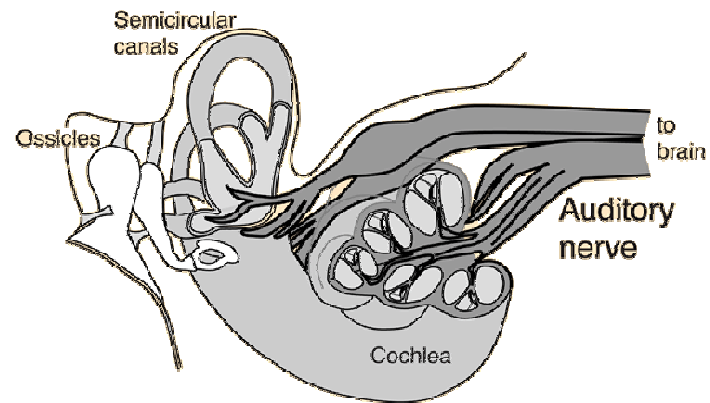
How Does Our Hearing Work?

- The stapes taps the oval window, which is the entrance to the inner ear.
- The inner ear is filled with fluid, so the sound signal changes to a hydraulic signal.



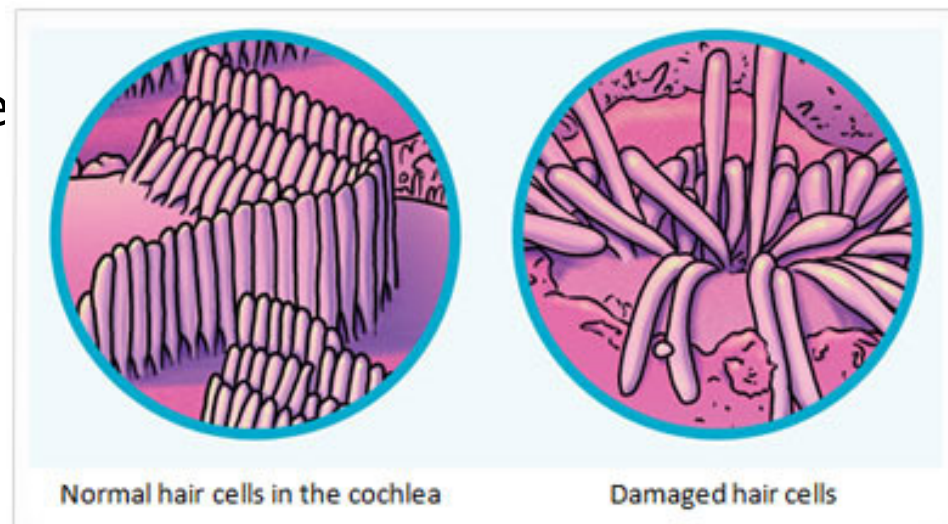
How Does Our Hearing Work?

The tiny nerve fibres transmit the sounds as electrical signals or impulses, which travel along the auditory nerve to the brain.



How Does Our Hearing Work?

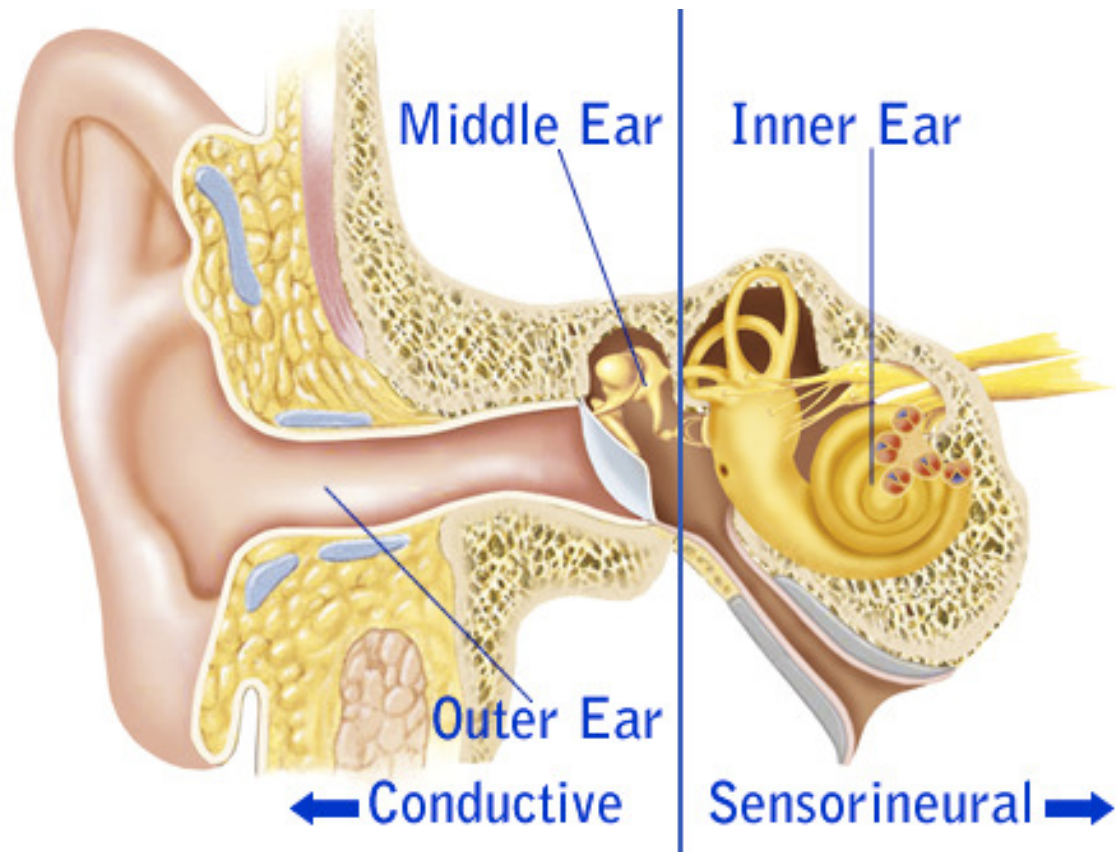
The oval window's vibration causes wave in the inner ear fluid, which stimulate delicate hair cells attached to the cochlea.



Types of Hearing Loss

- Neural/Sensorineural
- Conductive
- Combination





Other causes

- Excessive noise exposure
- Disease
- Medications
- Genetic/heredity
- Accident/Trauma



Combat noise harms soldier's hearing

Ear plugs are recommended for volumes 85 decibels or above. Without them, instant ear damage occurs at about 140 decibels.




SOURCE: American Tinnitus Association

AP


Statistics on Hearing Loss

- 23% of Canadians have some form of hearing loss
- Average age of someone with hearing loss is 51
- Men are more likely to experience hearing loss than women.
- For those over 65, percentage rises to 50%
- Fastest growing phenomena related to aging in Canada
- By 2015 it is estimated that 1.1 billion people will be affected with hearing loss globally.
- It is projected to double from 5 million to 10.4 million by 2036



Look for the Signs


There are many telltale signs of hearing loss in seniors. A day in the life of a hearing loss older adult may include struggles with forms of communications. Watch for these warning sign of hearing loss. Signs of hearing loss in older adults may include:

- Speaking louder than necessary in a conversation.
 - Constantly asking for words to be repeated
 - Straining to hear
 - Misunderstanding conversations
 - Favoring one ear
 - Thinking that people always mumble
 - Turning up the television or radio up louder than usual
 - Having difficulty hearing on the telephone
 - Withdrawing from social contact
 - Ringing or buzzing in the ears (tinnitus)
 - Appearing dull and disinterested in conversation
 - Being slow to respond or respond inappropriately
 - Hearing alarms or telephone
 - Understanding when speaker's face is unseen
 - Uncharacteristic silence in social situations
- 




Mental Health Ramifications

Studies have shown untreated hearing loss can lead to:

- Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Social paranoia
 - Isolation or Withdrawnal
- 



Why the Reluctance to Act?

- Hearing loss is often progressive and happens slowly over time.
 - Many believe nothing can be done.
 - Some people view it as a sign of weakness.
 - Vanity
 - Fear of Aging
 - Fear of new challenges
 - Associate hearing aids with disability
 - “I hear what I want to hear”
- 


First steps to help seniors with their hearing loss



- Visit the family doctor
- Seniors may be sent to see an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, throat specialist)
- Either doctor will probably refer them to an audiologist



Your Audiologist will determine:

- if there is hearing loss
 - the type of hearing loss
 - the pattern of hearing loss
 - the degree of hearing loss (mild, moderate, severe)
 - the individuals ability to understand speech
- 


What is a hearing aid?

- Electronic device
- Battery-powered
- Consists of a microphone, receiver, amplifier, battery and ear mold.





The truth about hearing aids

- Need for realistic expectations
 - Need to get accustomed to them
 - Getting use to them requires patience and practice
 - Not like glasses, cannot give you back perfect hearing
 - May need repeated adjustments
 - Situations where there is background noise may still be difficult
- 

The role of the brain in hearing loss

- Brain forgets to listen
- Must be retrained to recognize everyday noises




Assistive Listening Devices

- Other technology that can help:
 - Vibrating alarm clocks
 - Amplified phones
 - TV amplification devices
 - Pocket talkers
 - Assistive signaling devices





Consider Speechreading Classes

- Research tells us that people with hearing loss “hear” better by using visual cues such as lip-reading, body language and facial expressions.
 - You can improve your comprehension by learning to “read” what others are saying.
- 



Peer to Hear

Individuals who are struggling in their hard of hearing environment and whose personal safety, work productivity, social inclusion and mental health are compromised, are matched with a trained volunteer similar to themselves to provide personalized support, mentorship and education.


Sound Advice Program – The Sound Advice Series features educational courses that provides tools, strategies and coping knowledge so those with a hearing loss are able to engage fully in life. Courses includes Managing your Hearing Loss, Speechreading (various levels) and Hearing the Caregiver. Support and social groups for speechreading or tinnitus are available to join at Deaf and Hear Alberta.

To register and learn more information at www.hearalberta.ca






Set Your Stage

- Allow good lighting so the senior can see your face
 - Have conversation in a quiet area
 - Anticipate difficult situations
 - Ensure the senior can hear you at close distance
- 




Do Your Part

- Concentrate on the senior
 - Look for visual clues
 - Provide for written clues if needed
 - Don't interrupt
 - Let conversation flow for the senior to fill in blanks
 - Maintain a sense of humour
 - Give senior feedback (nod of head, acknowledge what they said)
 - Don't allow senior to bluff and speak up when seniors don't understand
 - If seniors are tired, ask for the conversation to take place at another time.
- 



Tell Others About Your Hearing Loss

- You may be reluctant to tell others
 - It's in your own best interest to let the listener know
 - Cuts down on misunderstandings
- 



Our advice to you Service Providers


How to H.E.L.P. Hearing Problems

H: Hang in there – Thought the process may become frustrating, research shows that family recommendations and pressure are the number one reason people address their hearing loss problems.

E: Express your feelings – Tell them why you and the senior are affected by their hearing loss symptoms. Try not to make it about them, make it about the family.

L: Lead by example – Go in for a free hearing test and offer to go with the senior or make it a family trip!

P: Provide a caring environment – Try not to point blame at the senior, and instead try to be understanding and helpful throughout the process.







Overall Health

Seniors maintaining overall good health is good for their hearing. Healthy eating habits and a regular exercise regimen will improve all aspects of their lives. Regular medical check ups can help catch health problems before they cause long term damage. If there is a history of hearing loss in the family, be sure to encourage them to schedule an annual hearing examination to monitor their hearing.


State of art diagnostics, combine with the selection of appropriate hearing aids and skilled, professional programming and fitting that are provided by audiologists, combined with assistive listening devices and acoustical modifications may help create the optimal listening environment for any hearing impaired senior.


With resources available at Deaf and Hear Alberta, we have coping strategies resources, speech reading classes, Peer to Hear program and a large variety of assistive listening devices. For more information, contact us for more details on resources available.





Thank you for hearing my
presentation about Seniors
dealing with hearing loss and
what you can do about it.





For more resources and information, please contact Deaf and Hear Alberta

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