

Hearing Loss: Use It or Lose It

Hearing loss is often gradual and, therefore, something that you adapt to. You may not notice it for months. But slowly, the hearing apparatus that nature provided does wear out for many as we grow older and it's simply part of the aging process.

There's a growing collection of detailed studies that demonstrate, clinically, that people with hearing loss do better addressing the limitation when they act quickly. In other words, the first time the family tells you to turn down the TV, it's time for a hearing test.

Why? When the hearing nerves and the areas of the brain responsible for hearing are deprived of sound, they atrophy – weaken – making recovery from hearing loss through mechanical means, aka a hearing aid, that much more difficult. The fancy term used by hearing professionals is auditory deprivation.

The key to hearing better longer is to keep the ear bits active and NOT let them atrophy. Through the use of hearing aids – early, when you first notice hearing loss – you'll enjoy a better quality of hearing longer.

Adult-Onset Hearing Loss & Auditory Deprivation

First, hearing loss may not be detected quickly so assume the worst. If you're over 50, see a hearing professional. And if you grew up listening to your favourite loud music, see a hearing professional regardless of age. Those "tunes" can damage your hearing in a matter of minutes.

What are the causes of adult-onset auditory deprivation? Well, according to the ear pros, there are a few important ones you should recognize. And then take action.

Causes of Auditory Deprivation in Adults

The most common cause is simple. The person with the hearing loss chooses not to treat their hearing loss with amplification – hearing aids. When no action is taken and the nerves of the hearing mechanism aren't use, they become deprived of stimulation and slowly become weakened.

Another cause of auditory deprivation is single-ear hearing aid use. This asymmetrical setup causes one ear to take on more of the listening activity than the other, weakening the unaided ear over time. Over time, that unaided ear is going to lose more and more functionality and when you do get around to buying a pair of hearing aids or adding a second hearing aid, that unaided ear will have a harder time adapting to sound.

There's no shortage of causes of auditory deprivation, nor is there a shortage of folks who experience this condition, making their hearing loss harder to address simply because current hearing loss causes the hearing mechanism to be under-used, leading to auditory deprivation and the weakening of the entire hearing system.

Can Hearing Aids Give Your Ears The Work-Out They Need?

Well, there are several studies that indicate that the ear can recover from the effects of auditory deprivation, though other studies show that “resolution of auditory deprivation is generally significant but incomplete following binaural amplification,” or in other words, yes, things get better with a pair of hearing aids but the improvement is incomplete, meaning that the sooner you recognize hearing loss, the sooner you get treatment for hearing loss, the more success you will have with hearing aids and the better hearing you will have.

Then, there is the Brain

You don't actually “hear” a sound until the brain's hearing centers receive electrical signals from the ear, process those signals for location, proximity and cause and generate some reaction – like getting out of the way of an on-coming car as you cross the street.

Well, not only do the hearing nerves weaken over time, the hearing centers of the brain, under-utilized, also tend to weaken – atrophy – as a result of auditory deprivation. In other words, the hearing centers no longer receive and process as many electrical hearing messages from the ear – even if the ear is delivering ample stimuli.

The recovery of the hearing centers of the brain also weaken slowly over time. Starting to get the picture?

“But I Don't Want Hearing Aids!”

You may be reluctant to seek help, but here's the thing with hearing loss. The longer you ignore it, the harder it is to treat. Research clearly shows the sooner you treat hearing loss the better outcome you will have with using and adapting to hearing aids.

What is the solution? Keep your hearing nerves fresh and stimulated – don't deprive them. See a hearing professional when you first suspect hearing loss. And, if you've suspected (or known) you have hearing loss, move your ears to a hearing professional instead of turning up the TV and radio.

Finally, a pair of hearing aids, regardless of your age, will improve life's quality. Today's hearing aids are lightweight, sleek, very discrete, and powerful and packed with conveniences that make hearing fun again.

Hearing is one of the joys of life. The sooner you act when you suspect hearing loss, the better your hearing will be in the years ahead. So, come on, what are you waiting for? You know this is something that's got to get done. Pick up the phone and call a [Hitchon's Hearing Centre Clinic](#) near you today.

There's a better quality of life waiting on the other end of the line.