



Hearing Health

Fall 2019

Better Hearing

Better Understanding

Better Living



Diabetes and hearing loss are two of America's most widespread public health concerns. Nearly 30 million people in the U.S. have diabetes, another 84 million are pre-diabetic, and an estimated 34.5 million people have some type of hearing loss. **According to a 2008 study funded by the National Institutes of Health, hearing loss is more than twice as common in adults with diabetes compared to those who do not have the disease.** Even prediabetics have a 30 percent higher rate of hearing loss compared to people with normal blood glucose. While a certain degree of hearing loss is a normal part of the aging process for all of us, it is often accelerated in patients with diabetes, especially if blood-glucose levels are not adequately controlled.

What causes or contributes to hearing loss in people with diabetes isn't clear. It's known that high blood sugar can damage blood vessels throughout the body, affecting areas like the eyes and kidneys. If you've had diabetes for a long time and it isn't well-controlled, there could be damage to the vast network of small blood vessels in your ears as well. The structures of the inner ear are highly vascularized and do not have a backup supply of blood flow. Thus, hearing loss could be the result of permanent damages to the blood vessels in the inner ear.

Another complication of diabetes is nerve damage. It's possible that damage to the auditory nerves could also directly lead to hearing loss. And research suggests that women in particular with diabetes may experience greater hearing loss than those without the disease. This also applies to women with well-controlled diabetes. The bottom line: more research is needed to fully understand the link between diabetes and hearing loss.

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Given these findings, diabetic and pre-diabetic patients should have their hearing screened on an annual basis. If you think you might be losing your hearing, ask yourself the following questions:

Has anyone complained that you're not listening? Do you often ask people to repeat themselves? Do you complain that people are always mumbling? Do you have problems following conversations with more than two people? Have people complained that you listen to the TV or radio too loudly? Do you have trouble understanding conversations in crowded rooms? **If you answered yes to more than one of these questions, you should have your hearing tested to assess it and prevent further damage.**

There is a lot you can do to reduce your risk and preserve hearing, including:

- **Control blood sugar.** Gaining and maintaining tight blood sugar control could keep your ears sharp longer. Exercise regularly, manage your weight, maintain a balanced nutritional diet, and moderate your blood glucose levels with medication as needed.
- **Don't smoke and reduce hypertension.** Avoid tobacco use, as smoking increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, which can further compound your risk for hearing damage. Smoking speeds hearing loss on its own, but acts as a risk multiplier when combined with poorly controlled diabetes.
- **Manage loud noise.** When researchers look at hearing loss, they consider a noisy work environment to be one in which you have to raise your voice to be heard. If you can't switch tasks or jobs, consider using noise canceling or reducing devices to protect your ears. When listening to music or talking on your phone, keep the volume low.

If you have any questions or concerns, please schedule an appointment to have your hearing checked.

Kids Corner



Playing Sports with Hearing Loss

The challenges that your child may face while playing sports does not mean it can't be done, it just means playing sports with hearing loss requires different strategies and preparation!

1. **Secure your hearing aids:** You can secure your child's hearing aids by using a clip which attaches to the hearing aid and then securely to your child's clothing.
2. **Headbands/Sweatbands:** Using a regular sweatband or one that is specifically made to fit over your child's hearing aids can add a layer of protection to help keep sweat and debris from getting to the hearing aids and its components.
3. **Keep your Hearing Aids Dry:** A hearing aid dehumidifier is a good way to help remove excess moisture from your child's hearing aid and keep them dry. As well, placing the hearing aids in a dehumidifier every night helps remove any excess debris or moisture.
4. **Communication:** It is important for you or your child to talk to the coach, as well as to the teammates and referees about your child's hearing loss. For example, using hand signals to communicate or having a buddy help relate messages that may be missed could be helpful during games or recitals.
5. **Follow-up with your Audiologist:** It is important to discuss further strategies with your primary audiologist, as well as attend your scheduled hearing aid checks for cleaning and programming of your child's hearing aid.



Tips From the Pros

Tips From the Pros – Communication Tips for Families of Hearing-Impaired Persons

Just because your loved one has made the decision for better hearing, it will take time and patience to get "re-acquainted" with lost sounds and voices. Encourage them to use their hearing aids daily as much as they can to allow their brains to adjust. This may take upwards of 12 weeks for some people, so consistency of use will help facilitate adjustment to better hearing. Also remember, we cannot restore normal hearing. Depending on their ability to process auditory information, you may still need to get their attention prior to speaking to them, reduce unwanted distractions in the room (i.e. turn down the TV or shut it off during conversations), and do not try having conversations from room to room.

You Ask. We Answer.

Question: Are my hearing aids waterproof?

Answer: Your hearing aids are not waterproof, but they are water resistant! Here's what that means.

- Trace amounts of water, sweat, and other moisture will not damage your hearing aids. They may be small, but your hearing aids are more durable than you may think!
- If you are briefly walking in the rain or sweating at the gym, there is no need to remove your hearing aids.
- If your hearing aids do accidentally get wet (i.e. you briefly step into the shower with the hearing aids still on), promptly wipe them off with a dry cloth and open the battery doors. Allow the hearing aids to fully dry before turning them back on. If you have the rechargeable option and cannot open the battery door, simply turn the hearing aids off, wipe them down, and leave the aids in a safe, dry area until they are fully dry.
- If your hearing aids do not seem to be working after coming into contact with moisture, you may either drop them off at our front desk or call to schedule an appointment for a hearing aid check. We can help get your hearing aids working again!
- Still concerned about moisture damaging your aids? You can take protective measures by purchasing a Dry Caddy. Used nightly, a Dry Caddy can help absorb unavoidable moisture that finds its way into the hearing aids from everyday activities. Ask your audiologist for details!



Carolina Audiology Welcomes Audiologists



Kali Boyle, AuD

Born in Wilmington, Delaware, Dr. Boyle graduated from the University of Mississippi with a Bachelor of Science in communication sciences and disorders. Dr. Boyle attended Nova Southeastern University for graduate school and completed her 4th year externship at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital in Saint Petersburg, FL. She received her Doctor of Audiology in May 2019.

Dr. Boyle's clinical interests include pediatric audiology, electrophysiology testing and providing accessible hearing care and intervention for children and their families.



Eileen Clark, AuD

Born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Clark graduated magna cum laude from Central Michigan University in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science in communication sciences and disorders. She then returned to Central Michigan University for graduate school and completed her 4th year externship at Hearing Evaluation Services in Buffalo, NY. She received her Doctor of Audiology in May 2019.

She received her Doctor of Audiology in May 2019. Dr. Clark's clinical interests include vestibular testing as well as diagnostic testing and treatment of hearing loss.



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