

Did you know . . .

hearing health and your quality of life are closely related to many common medical conditions?

⦿ Cardiovascular disease presents a variety of different complications including high blood pressure, arrhythmia, stroke and heart attack. Recently a growing body of research is also linking hearing loss and heart disease. A study conducted by Harvard University cited a staggering relation between heart disease and hearing loss finding "hearing loss occurred 54% more often in people with heart disease than in the general population." Hearing loss is one of the most common physical ailments for the general public, third only to heart disease and arthritis respectively.

HEART DISEASE

⦿ Cardiovascular disease is a disease of the heart and blood vessels. Many of the problems surrounding heart disease are a direct result of a condition called atherosclerosis in which plaque builds up on the arteries, narrowing the arterial path, making it harder for blood to flow through the veins, arteries and ultimately bodily organs. The inner ear is extremely sensitive to blood flow. If blood flow is inadequate, interrupted or the vessels suffer a trauma, the result can be damage to the inner ear nerves, negatively impacting a person's ability to hear. In fact, the nerves in the inner ear are so fragile that Harvard researchers believe they may be the first organ affected by cardiovascular disease. In essence, hearing loss may be one of the earliest indicators of heart disease.

DEMENTIA

⦿ Research indicates in 2015, an estimated 5.3 million Americans of all ages have Alzheimer's and every 67 seconds, someone develops the disease. For those 60 years and older, the severity of hearing loss is closely related to the risk of dementia. Hearing loss may be associated with changed brain structure and reduced brain volume. Good hearing provides stimulating input to the brain and thus enables cognition. In addition, good hearing also facilitates orientation, supports a sense of security and thus enables activities of daily living and autonomy in old age.

⦿ Age-related hearing loss (presbycusis) is the loss of hearing that gradually occurs in most of us as we grow older. It is one of the most common conditions affecting older and elderly adults. Approximately one in three people in the United States between the ages of 65 and 74 has hearing loss, and nearly half of those older than 75 have difficulty hearing. Age-related hearing

AGING

loss most often occurs in both ears, affecting them equally. Because the loss is gradual, if you have age-related hearing loss you may not realize that you've lost some of your ability to hear. There are many causes of age-related hearing loss. Most commonly, it arises from changes in the inner ear as we age, but it can also result from changes in the middle ear, or from complex changes along the nerve pathways from the ear to the brain. Certain medical conditions and medications may also play a role.

KIDNEY DISEASE

⦿ An estimated 54% of American adults with chronic kidney disease have hearing loss. Research indicates the structural and functional similarities between tissues in the inner ear and in the kidney may explain the link between moderate chronic kidney disease and hearing loss. According to the National Kidney Foundation, the toxins that accumulate during kidney failure can damage nerves, including those in the inner ear.

⦿ Hearing loss occurs almost twice as often in adults who have diabetes than in those who don't, according to a new study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), likely due to inner ear changes caused by high blood sugar.

DIABETES

Adults with pre-diabetes, whose blood glucose is higher than normal but not high enough for a diabetes diagnosis, had a 30 percent higher rate of hearing loss compared to those with normal blood sugar tested after an overnight fast.

OTOTOXICITY

⦿ Ototoxicity occurs when a person ingests certain medications that can adversely affect the way the inner ear functions. Resulting in damage to the organs responsible for hearing and balance. Such damage can lead to temporary or permanent hearing loss, and/or loss of balance. Hearing and balance problems caused by these drugs can be reversed when the drug therapy is discontinued. Sometimes, however, the damage is permanent.

DEPRESSION

⦿ Untreated hearing loss can cause serious social and emotional problems for adults and the elderly. Having trouble hearing can make it hard to understand and follow a doctor's advice, respond to warnings, and hear phones, doorbells, and smoke alarms. Hearing loss can also make it hard to enjoy talking with family and friends, leading to feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, paranoia, and other emotional distress.

⦿ Hearing loss alone can cause diminished spatial awareness or reduced attention capacity—which can increase the risk of falls and greater difficulty in performing activities of daily living.

VISION LOSS

Research indicates those with both vision and hearing loss often have an even greater risk of falls and related hospitalization.