

February 2006 Editorial for Caledon Enterprise

What is Hearing Loss?

Hearing loss is the reduced sensitivity to sounds. Statistics Canada report one in ten people in Canada have hearing loss and more than one in four individuals over the age of 65 experience significant loss.

Is hearing loss normal?

The most common type of hearing loss (presbycusis) affects both ears equally and gradually. The population of hearing impaired people is getting younger mainly due to the increase of noise exposure in our community.

Is it okay to ignore a hearing problem?

No. While some types of hearing loss may be natural, others types may be a warning sign to serious medical problems, therefore, early identification is very important. With natural hearing loss, research has shown those individuals treated with hearing aids or medically, report better family relationships, higher self-esteem, improved mental health, greater feelings of independence and security, better overall health and increased social activity. Communication impacts *every* aspect of our lives.

How do you know if you have a hearing loss?

Chances are, you may be the last to know. The most natural way to lose hearing is gradually. As such, you may not notice a decline in your hearing until the people around you notice you may be having trouble. You may ask people to repeat themselves, especially when there is competing noise.

What are some signs of hearing loss?

Asking for repetition, turning up the volume on the television, people seem to mumble, hear people speaking but not understanding what they are saying, more difficulty communicating in restaurant or in groups with noise.

What are the impacts of hearing loss?

Difficult to follow conversation, as such, individuals become tired from the effort required to listen, strained relationships with family and friends, avoidance of social situations, loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable.

What should be done if we have a concern about our hearing?

The hearing expert is an audiologist, who should be seen annually. They are not in the business of simply "selling" hearing aids, but are in the profession of identifying and treating hearing loss and auditory processing disorders, preventing hearing loss, educating, and enhancing overall quality of life. Early identification is crucial to maintaining the health of our hearing.

What about hearing loss in children?

Since about four to six of every 1000 babies in Ontario are born with hearing loss, it is now mandatory that all children are screened for hearing loss at birth. Audiologists are the *only* professionals qualified to identify and treat hearing loss in this population. Hearing loss must be diagnosed and treated early to allow the child to acquire speech and language.

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Here for you today so you can Hear tomorrow.*