

## **The Complex Link Between Depression and Hearing Loss**

Depression and hearing loss have long been linked but research now shows that individuals with hearing loss are more than twice as likely to also suffer from depression as those without hearing loss.

Now the third most occurring condition in older adults, hearing loss typically occurs gradually and is characterized by loss of the highest frequency consonants and trouble filtering background noise. Between 25 and 40 percent of individuals age 65+ have hearing loss but the majority of hearing loss in older adults goes undetected and untreated.

Currently, only 9 percent of doctors offer hearing tests to their older patients, so it is vital that physicians offer regular hearing tests, become familiar with the symptoms of depression, and screen patients accordingly — especially if a hearing loss is suspected. Similarly, friends and family members should be aware of the signs of depression.

While symptoms such as sadness and hopelessness are more obvious, others are less well known. Fatigue, difficulty concentrating, loss of appetite, irritability, and loss of interest in hobbies can all interfere with normal, daily life. Because depression can be caused by hearing loss, a hearing test prior to prescribing antidepressants could help patients avoid unnecessary medications.

To help minimize the risk of depression related to hearing loss, those suspecting hearing loss should seek the care of a hearing healthcare professional as early as possible. Studies show that those who seek treatment for hearing loss early on greatly reduce their risk of depression, while a separate survey found that 9 out of 10 individuals reported a significant improvement in their quality of life after receiving hearing aids.

After seeking treatment, it is important to remember that a well-planned adjustment period is necessary for new hearing instruments and a good aural rehabilitation program will help hearing aid users adjust to the new equipment and sounds gradually.

If you or someone you know is experiencing depression, a simple hearing test could change the course dramatically. Call us at [PHONE NUMBER] or click on the button below to fill out our online contact form to have your hearing checked!