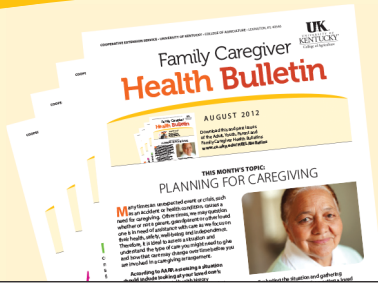


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



DECEMBER 2014

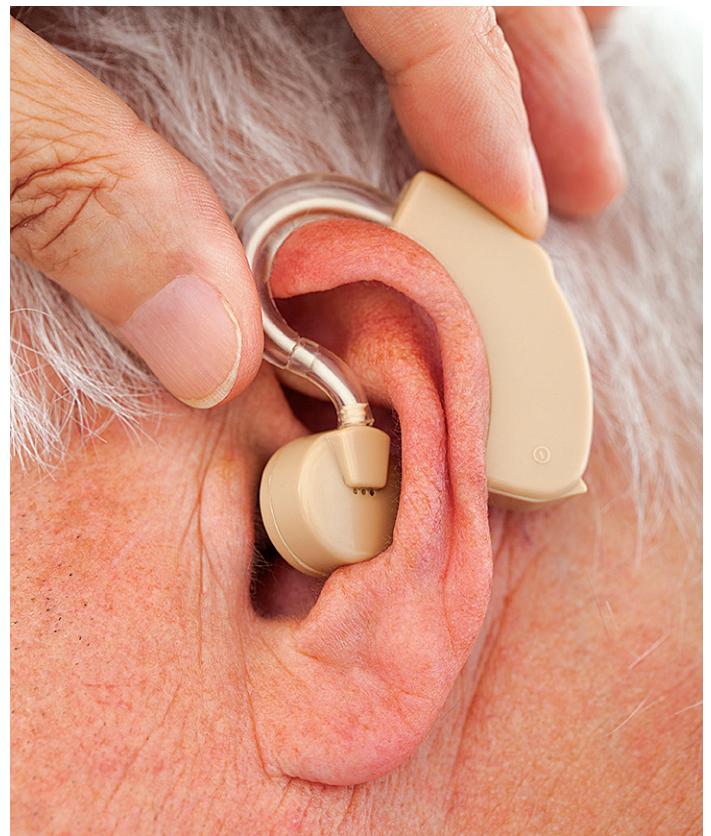
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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss, no matter what age it occurs, should be treated. Research demonstrates that even minor hearing loss, left untreated over time, ages the brain faster and may even lead to dementia. In addition, hearing loss is associated with higher risk of poor physical and mental health, including depression, falls and hospitalizations.

Isolation due to hearing loss is not uncommon. People get tired of not being able to hear and may feel self-conscious when they may have to continuously ask questions because they missed what was said. Such isolation contributes not only to the physical and mental decline, but it negatively affects overall well-being. Older adults with hearing loss have been connected to extended periods of inactivity, which leads to illness, injury, stress, depression and bad moods.

Sometimes those suffering from hearing loss are not aware of it. It is not uncommon for family and friends to notice it.



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If you suspect hearing loss, it is important to see a health care professional, such as an ear, nose and throat doctor.

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Signs of hearing loss:

- Muffled hearing
- Asking people to repeat themselves
- Trouble hearing on the telephone
- Difficulty understanding what people are saying
- Trouble hearing in groups
- Not hearing an alarm clock
- Difficulty hearing at the movies
- Listening to music or television at higher volumes than in the past
- Avoiding conversation or social interaction
- Dread going to noisy places
- Failing to hear someone talking behind you
- Ear pain or itching
- Ringing or buzzing in the ears
- Dizziness
- Pus or fluid leaking from the ear

If you suspect hearing loss, it is important to see a health care professional, such as an ear, nose and throat doctor (otolaryngologist or otologist) so that you or someone you care for can be screened or to rule out any other medical condition. A professional will help you identify the problem and propose ways to treat it. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association recommends that adults have their hearing checked at least once every 10 years until the age of 50 and every 3 years after age 50. If you suspect hearing loss—even the tiniest bit, you should schedule an appointment with an audiologist right away. You should also be tested if you are regularly exposed to loud noises, including music.

According to Dr. Lin of Johns Hopkins University, “as many as 27 million Americans over age 50, including two-thirds of men and women aged 70 years and older, suffer from some form of hearing loss.”



Even if hearing loss is diagnosed, there are several things one can do to help cope and make communication easier. Hearing aids, for example, are now made in all shapes and sizes and vary in cost. There is also increasing financial help to make hearing aids more affordable.

For more information, talk to your health care provider.

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Written by: Amy Hosier, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist for Family Life
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com

