



Hearing Loss: The Signs and Symptoms

“When you lose your eyesight, you lose touch with things. When you lose your hearing, you lose touch with people.” - Helen Keller

The World Health Organisation has identified hearing loss as the most prevalent sensory disability affecting 360 million people worldwide. Research shows that 1 in 5 people in Australia have hearing loss, and for those over the age of 65 years, this increases to 1 in 2.

For many people, hearing loss is gradual and difficult to identify. Recognising hearing loss, is the first step toward improving interpersonal communication with friends, family and loved ones.



Some of the symptoms of hearing loss include:

- People around you seem to mumble.
- You can hear but not understand.
- You often ask people to repeat themselves.
- Children and women's voices are harder to hear and understand.
- You have difficulty following conversations when in groups, or where there's background noise (family occasions, meetings, restaurants).
- TV or radio needs to be turned up.

Hearing loss left undetected or untreated can affect your well-being, resulting in:

- Avoidance of social situations.
- A tendency to dominate conversation.
- Feelings of low self-esteem.
- A tendency to appear aloof or rude in social situations.
- An increase in frustration and communication breakdown with partners and family/friends.
- Being accused of selective hearing.
- Unexplained fatigue.



Acknowledging the difficulties that you are experiencing is the hardest part of the journey. It takes the average person between six and ten years to come to terms with their hearing loss and reach the point at which they seek and accept help.

Untreated hearing loss can cause embarrassment, social stress, tension and fatigue. It can cause sadness and depression, worry and anxiety, paranoia, emotional turmoil and insecurity and lead to less social activities.

According to the Centre for Population Studies' Hearing Impairment in an Australian Population study (1998), only 40% of people that have a significant hearing loss seek treatment. However, the majority of hearing aid wearers reported significantly improved quality of life including improvements in personal relationships, self-esteem and overall health.