

**Deaf & Hear**  
Alberta

# Hearing Loss

Hearing Matters for an Aging Population: Research findings and evidence-based recommendations for communication and hearing loss

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## Deaf & Hear Alberta

An Alberta non-profit organization that brings together Deaf, hard of hearing & hearing Albertans with service and technology options to advance access and opportunity.

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Statistics Canada 2016 has shown that for the first time in Canadian history, the 65+ group of citizens is larger than the under 14 group. To accurately support growing senior populations in our communities, a thorough understanding of hearing health by senior care givers is essential.

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Hearing loss is often progressive and happens slowly over time. 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. According to the Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2012/13, nearly 70% of individuals in Canada who have hearing loss are unaware of it.

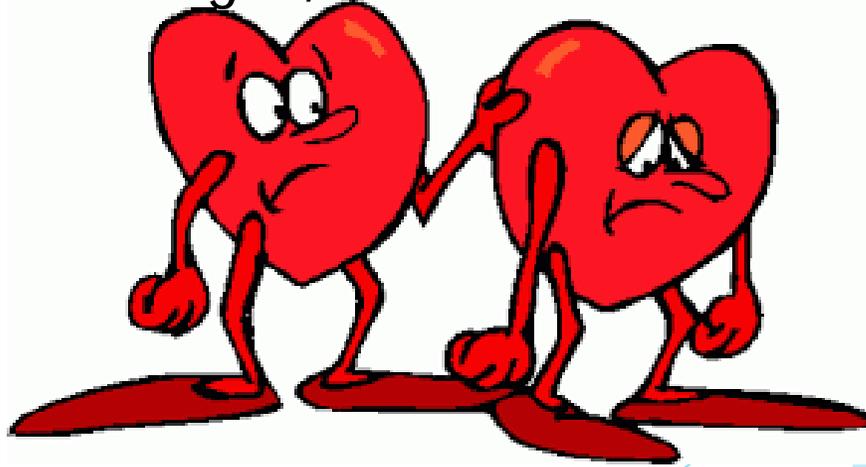
# Do I Have Hearing Loss?

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- ▶ I have difficulty in noisy environments
  - ▶ You have difficulty conversing in noisy environments. You have difficulty following conversation when others are talking and music is playing. You have difficulty hearing conversations in restaurants.
- ▶ People complain to me about the volume on my TV or radio.
  - ▶ People complain that you turn the TV volume up too loud.
- ▶ I have trouble in group conversations.
  - ▶ Group conversations are difficult particularly when people are talking over each other. Social situations are becoming difficult.
- ▶ I have trouble hearing on the telephone.
  - ▶ You have trouble hearing over the telephone or do you have to turn up the volume on the telephone to hear properly.
- ▶ I can hear people talking, but can't UNDERSTAND them
  - ▶ Many people you talk to seem to mumble or not speak clearly
- ▶ I have particular trouble when women or children are speaking.

### Hearing loss is a loss like any other.

First acknowledge that hearing loss is a loss like any other in someone's life. People react in different ways to noticing hearing loss. What's important to note, is that one's reaction may be very similar to how we may react (with grief) at losing something or someone we relied on, that made us feel safe. Whether hearing loss came on gradually, or happened overnight, it is still a loss that was once highly valued.



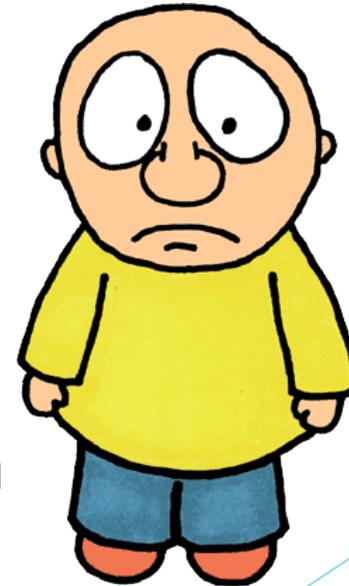
*Hearing Loss has an impact*

Balance issues can lead to more falls and possible hospitalization

Family relationships suffer from difficulty communicating - leading to isolation

Lack of social contact can lead to depression

Hearing loss can have a significant impact on an individual's safety



## Hearing Loss can lead to Social Isolation

- ▶ *People with hearing loss have to:*
- ▶ Put forth more effort to keep up with a conversation.
- ▶ Need visual cues to put context together to understand the topic of conversation.
- ▶ More brainpower is needed to fill in the missing cues.
- ▶ Sustained effort is required and it becomes more of a struggle to keep up with a conversation.
- ▶ A noisy environment or a softer speaking person makes the situation more problematic.



### Social Isolation Occurs when People Withdraw

They no longer wish to put forth the effort and are tired of the struggle of trying to keep up with the conversation.

They withdraw from the situation and this withdrawal can impact their life.

They begin to withdraw from social events, or if they do attend, they withdraw from conversations or interactions.

This is perceived as lack of interest because of their lack of communication

Friends and family often start to misunderstand or misdiagnose the person because they are not aware of their hearing loss.

Eventually, the person with hearing loss may become depressed because of their social isolation.



There are ways to cope and improve your quality of life.

Studies suggest that self-management is a very successful coping strategy for chronic health conditions such as hearing loss.



# Learning to better manage your hearing loss will allow you to:

- Continue to participate in everyday conversations with family and friends
- Maintain confidence
- Maintain independence
- Maintain social life



# What can you do if you are concerned about your hearing?

- Visit your family doctor
  - Referral to ENT doctor or audiologist
- Hearing test with hearing care professional



**HEARING TEST**

## Visit Your Hearing Care Professional

- Pick a hearing professional who is focused on your hearing needs
- Don't be shy - ask questions
- Discuss lifestyle needs in addition to your hearing test
- Take someone with you
  - Ask them to confirm details and discuss options

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Using a hearing aid is *directly* linked with improved quality of life.

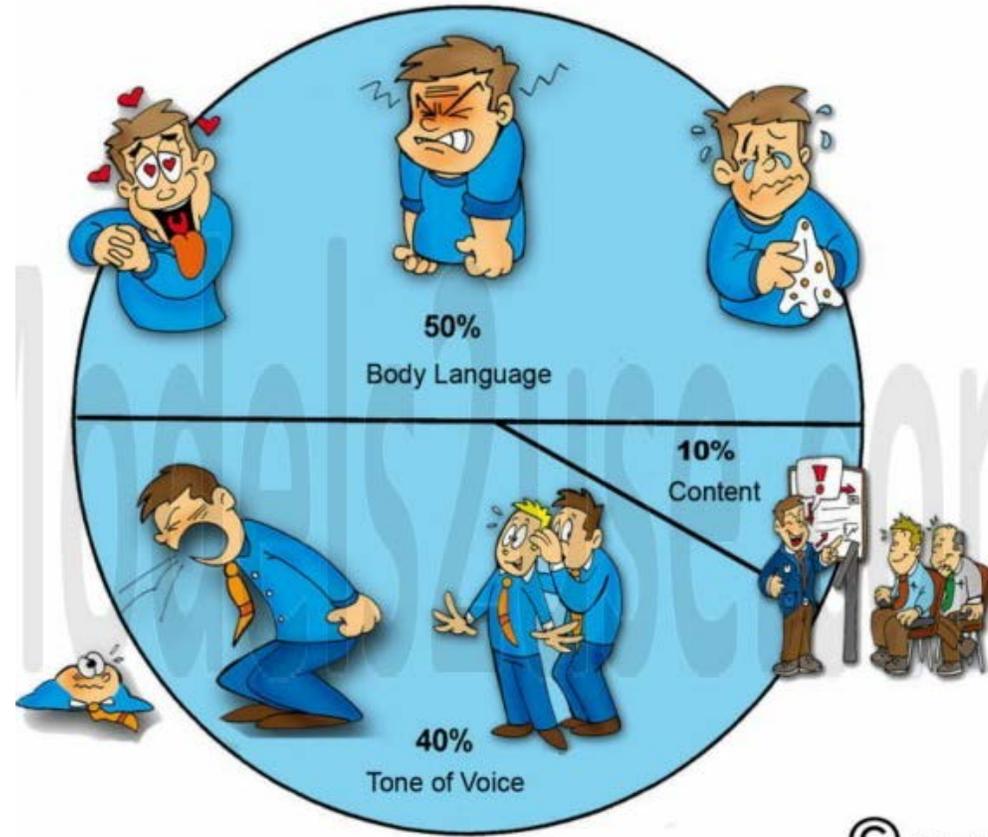
- The most beneficial effects are found in the hearing aid users' social lives, taking part in group activities, and family relationships.
- They have greater self-confidence, stronger self-image and better communicative functioning, resulting in overall higher self-esteem.
- Hearing aid users are more likely to engage in activities involving other people.
- Hearing aids help to reduce deterioration in psychological functioning as a result of hearing loss.

## Speechreading

Visual cues can improve our understanding by up to 20%

Speechreading is a skill. It combines the sounds you hear, the visuals of the movements of the lips, jaw, and tongue, as well as facial and body expressions. Paying attention to these details, can make up to 50% of the message a person receives.

### Face-to-Face Communication



A pair of rich red, heavy stage curtains with deep folds and a scalloped top edge, framing a white central area. The background to the right of the curtains is a blue geometric pattern of overlapping triangles and polygons.

# Set Your Stage

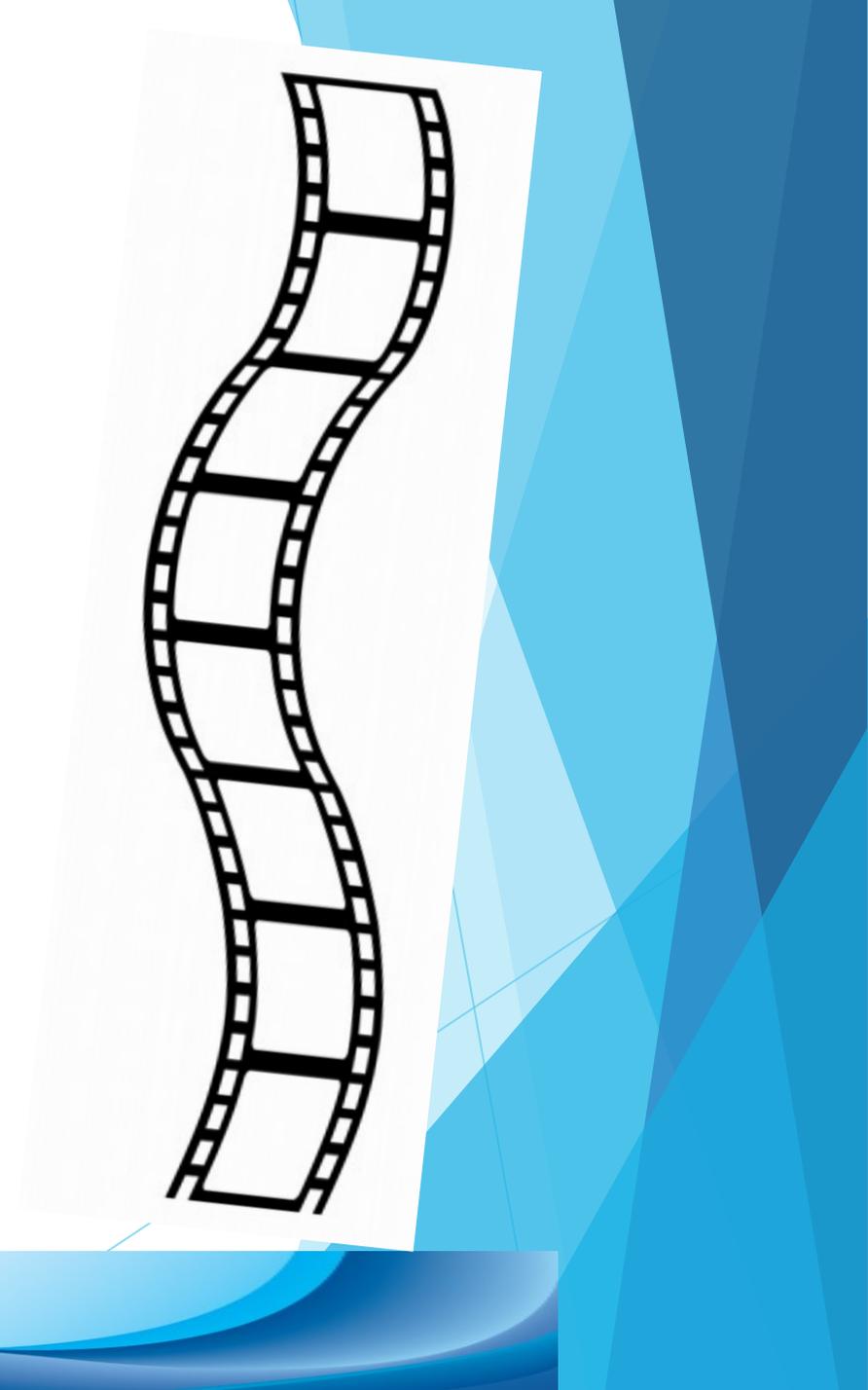
- Soft surfaces (carpet vs. hardwood; upholstered seating)
- Curtains and blinds
- Tablecloths, placemats
- Posters and pictures on walls
- More lighting
- Smaller rooms
- Turn the radio/television off

Tell the other person what you need!

# Movies

## Captioning

- Call ahead to make sure it is functioning
- Should be written on showtime listings





# Parties



- Arrive early (when it's quieter)
- Ask people to move the conversation to another room
- Carry your personal amplifier

# Restaurants

## Go off peak times

- Go earlier or later
- Monday or Tuesday nights

## Email or call ahead of time

- Explain situation
- Request quiet table
- Inquire about music

## Set your stage

- Booths are good
- Lots of carpeting and drapes absorb sound
- Low ceilings



# Work

## Accessibility is your Employer's Responsibility .. Advocate for yourself!

- Position of your desk - away from the busiest areas
- Carpeting and softer textures in office
- Correspond more by email & text - note that it is your preferred communication method
- Request an amplified telephone
- Sit closer to speakers at meetings or where you can see everyone's faces
- Schedule meetings and important conversations at times you are typically most alert and energized

# Contact Deaf & Hear Alberta

## We're here to support you!

### Sound Advice Program

- ▶ Educational Presentations
- ▶ Annual Safe Sound Awards
- ▶ Social Support Groups
- ▶ Speechreading Classes

### Peer Mentoring Program

- ▶ One to one mentorship
- ▶ Group mentorship

### Assistive Technology Services

- ▶ E-store
- ▶ Help with funding applications



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*Sharron Nixon*

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Hearing Services



*Thank you!*