

Hearing HealthCare News®

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

❄ Winter 2025

Sudden Hearing Loss

Hearing loss usually develops very slowly, but it can also occur suddenly—literally overnight or in the space of a few days.

Sudden hearing loss can be caused by ear wax or ear pressure following an airplane flight. However, the term “*sudden hearing loss*” usually refers to a sensorineural loss. The loss is almost always in one ear and may be accompanied by *dizziness* or *tinnitus* (ear noises). Fortunately, sudden hearing loss is rare, occurring in about one in 10,000 people annually.

In most cases, the specific cause of sudden hearing loss is never found. Viral infection or vascular blockage are believed to be the most common causes.

Partial or complete recovery occurs in about 65% of the cases. Recovery can take from a few days to a few months. Those who seek immediate medical attention have a higher recovery rate than those who wait.

Someone who develops sudden hearing loss should seek medical attention as soon as possible. The medical evaluation usually includes a thorough history and physical, and ear and hearing examinations. Follow-up care should include periodic audiologic examinations to monitor hearing levels.

Does Your Doctor Look for Hearing Loss?

“Hearing loss has important implications for patient quality of life. However, hearing loss is substantially undetected and untreated.”

That was the conclusion published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The authors recommended that physicians screen for hearing loss during routine physical examinations of their patients over 55 years of age. Unfortunately, only about 10% of primary care physicians screen their adult patients for hearing loss.

You can help

You can help by encouraging your doctor to screen for hearing loss. Your doctor may appreciate hearing about your own experiences and the important difference good hearing health care has made in *your* life.

Keep Your Hearing in Good Shape

Exercise is good for keeping our bodies in good shape. We also know that people who exercise—or at least those with good cardiovascular health—tend to have better hearing.

There is evidence that exercising our ears is also good for keeping our hearing in good shape.

A person with hearing loss in both ears who uses only one hearing aid tends to maintain or improve his or her ability to understand words in the ear with the hearing aid. The ear *without* the hearing aid tends to decline in word recognition ability. This decline is not a change in hearing sensitivity, but rather a decline in the ability to *process* the complex speech signal simply through lack of use.

One explanation of this gradual decline is that the ear without the hearing aid isn’t being “exercised.” Another explanation is that the area of the brain involved in hearing becomes less effective at processing speech information.

This gradual decline in speech recognition ability *usually* reverses

itself once the ear gets more stimulation (normally through use of a hearing aid). This gradual improvement in speech understanding may take four to six weeks after the hearing aid fitting and may continue for up to 12 weeks.



Implications

The findings from a number of studies suggest the following:

The longer a hearing loss is ignored, the greater the effects. The longer someone puts off using hearing aids, the

more likely word recognition ability will decline. The delay may also make it more difficult to adjust to hearing aids. To use the exercise analogy, if you don’t exercise for 10 years, it may take longer to get back in shape.

Exercising your ears keeps your hearing in good shape.

The sooner a hearing loss is treated, the easier the adjustment. If you never let your hearing get “out of shape,” it’s much easier to adjust to hearing “full-time.”

In almost all cases, two hearing aids are better than one. Two hearing aids will keep *both* ears and *both* sides of the brain actively involved in hearing.

Improved hearing may take a little time. Although hearing aids provide immediate benefits, it can take 6 to 12 weeks for a hearing aid user to get the *full* benefits of the improved hearing provided by hearing aids.

WELCOME

...to the Winter issue of our patient newsletter. We hope you find the information useful to you and to your family and friends.

Our practice is based on these fundamental principles:

- **Hearing loss is serious**
- **Hearing loss deserves professional care**
- **Hearing aids improve lives**

The New York Times on Hearing Loss

Hearing loss has been described by health experts as “*a hidden disability, often not obvious to others or even to those who have it.*”

New York Times personal health columnist Jane Brody described adult hearing loss as “*perhaps the nation’s most damaging and costly sensory handicap.*”

The good news is that hearing aids can prevent, minimize, or reverse the negative effects of untreated loss. Hearing aids reduce the effort, tension, anxiety and even depression that hearing loss can cause. As one researcher put it:

“Hearing aids are very successful treatments for reversing the effects caused by hearing impairment.”

Testing An Infant's Hearing: The Sooner The Better

Nearly 50 babies with permanent hearing loss are born every day in the United States.

Early identification makes a big difference. Today more than 95% of newborns have their hearing screened before leaving the hospital. The goal is to begin treatment as soon as possible, including family counseling, hearing aids, speech and language

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therapy, and early education. Babies who do not pass the hospital test are referred for complete audiologic evaluation.

Hearing testing

The most widely used method to test hearing in infants measures the "echo" of the ear to sound. This is an automated test that is quick and inexpensive—and can even be done while the baby is asleep.

Follow-up care

The purpose of early identification is to provide help as soon as possible. The family will need support and guidance as they learn about early intervention services, including medical and audiologic care, hearing aids or cochlear implants, speech/language therapy and family counseling.

Unlike years ago, it is common today for infants to be identified before

they are six months old. Intervention such as family counseling, hearing

Children who receive help before six months of age develop significantly better speech and language skills.

aids, cochlear implants and speech and language therapy can then begin. We've learned that infants with hearing loss who receive treatment prior to six months of age have:

- better speech and language skills;
- language in the normal range regardless of degree of hearing loss.
- parents who experience less stress than parents of late-identified children.

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Bringing Back Our Christmas Wish Tree

Duncan Nulph Hearing Associates will be partnering with Mechanicsburg School District to bring Christmas joy to less fortunate children in the area. We will have a **Christmas Wish Tree** located in the waiting room of our office from **December 2nd to December 13th**.

If you would like to purchase a gift for a child this year, please stop by the office and choose a snowman ornament with a child's gift wish. All gifts should be delivered to our office by **Wednesday, December 18th**, unwrapped with the tag from the tree. You may include wrapping paper with your gift, if so desired. We appreciate everyone that helps spread the holiday cheer!

Happy Holidays from the Staff at Duncan Nulph Hearing Associates.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kristen A. Duncan Au.D.

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Dr. Lisa Brown, Au.D.

Duncan-Nulph Hearing Associates

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