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Hearing Disorders and Deafness

Also called: Hearing loss, Presbycusis

It's frustrating to be unable to hear well enough to enjoy talking with friends or family. Hearing disorders make it hard, but not impossible, to hear. They can often be helped. Deafness can keep you from hearing sound at all.

What causes hearing loss? Some possibilities are:

- Heredity
- Diseases such as ear infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/earinfections.html>] and meningitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/meningitis.html>]
- Trauma
- Certain medicines
- Long-term exposure to loud noise [<https://medlineplus.gov/noise.html>]
- Aging

There are two main types of hearing loss. One happens when your inner ear or auditory nerve is damaged. This type is usually permanent. The other kind happens when sound waves cannot reach your inner ear. Earwax buildup, fluid, or a punctured eardrum can cause it. Treatment or surgery can often reverse this kind of hearing loss.

Untreated, hearing problems can get worse. If you have trouble hearing, you can get help. Possible treatments include hearing aids [<https://medlineplus.gov/hearingaids.html>] , cochlear implants [<https://medlineplus.gov/cochlearimplants.html>] , special training, certain medicines, and surgery.

NIH: National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

Start Here

- Hearing Loss [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hearing-loss/symptoms-causes/syc-20373072?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/hearing-loss/symptoms-causes/syc-20373072?p=1>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Hearing Problems [<https://familydoctor.org/symptom/hearing-problems/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/sintoma/problemas-de-audicion/?adfree=true>]
- Hearing Tests for Adults [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/hearing-tests-for-adults/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-audicion-para-adultos/>]

Living With

- Assistive Devices: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/assistivedevices.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/assistivedevices.html>]
- Hearing Aids: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/hearingaids.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)

- Who Can I Turn to for Help with My Hearing Loss? [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/who-can-i-turn-help-my-hearing-loss>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)

Related Issues

- American Sign Language [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/american-sign-language>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
- Conductive Hearing Loss [<https://www.enthealth.org/conditions/conductive-hearing-loss/>]  (American Academy of Otolaryngology--Head and Neck Surgery)
- Earbuds [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/earbuds.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/earbuds.html>]
- Earwax Blockage [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/earwax-blockage/symptoms-causes/syc-20353004?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/earwax-blockage/symptoms-causes/syc-20353004?p=1>]
- Noise and Hearing Loss [<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/noise/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Occupational Noise Exposure [<https://www.osha.gov/noise>] (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)
- Speech to Speech Relay Service [<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/speech-speech-relay-service>] (Federal Communications Commission)
- Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) [<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/telecommunications-relay-service-trs>] (Federal Communications Commission)

Specifics

- About Noise-Induced Hearing Loss [<https://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Alport Syndrome [<https://www.kidney.org/kidney-topics/alport-syndrome>] (National Kidney Foundation)
- Auditory Neuropathy [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/auditory-neuropathy>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/es/espanol/neuropatia-auditiva>]
- Hearing and Balance Symptoms and Conditions [<https://www.audiology.org/consumers-and-patients/hearing-and-balance/>] (American Academy of Audiology)
- Noise-Induced Hearing Loss [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/noise-induced-hearing-loss>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/es/espanol/perdida-de-audicion-inducida-por-el-ruido>]
- Otosclerosis [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/otosclerosis>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/es/espanol/otosclerosis>]
- Sudden Deafness [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/sudden-deafness>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/es/espanol/sordera-subita>]
- Vestibular Schwannoma (Acoustic Neuroma) and Neurofibromatosis [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/vestibular-schwannoma-acoustic-neuroma-and-neurofibromatosis>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)

Genetics

- Age-related hearing loss: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/age-related-hearing-loss>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Alström syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/alstrom-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)

- Björnstad syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/bjornstad-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Branchiootorenal/branchiootic syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/branchiootorenal-branchiootic-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Congenital deafness with labyrinthine aplasia, microtia, and microdontia: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/congenital-deafness-with-labyrinthine-aplasia-microtia-and-microdontia>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Craniofacial-deafness-hand syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/craniofacial-deafness-hand-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Deafness-dystonia-optic neuronopathy syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/deafness-dystonia-optic-neuronopathy-syndrome/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Jervell and Lange-Nielsen syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/jervell-and-lange-nielsen-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Keratitis-ichthyosis-deafness syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/keratitis-ichthyosis-deafness-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Otopalatodigital syndrome type 1: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/otopalatodigital-syndrome-type-1>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Otospondylomegaepiphyseal dysplasia: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/otospondylomegaepiphyseal-dysplasia>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Pendred syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/pendred-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Perrault syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/perrault-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Sensorineural deafness and male infertility: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/deafness-infertility-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Stickler syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/stickler-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Townes-Brocks Syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/townes-brocks-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Vohwinkel syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/vohwinkel-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Waardenburg syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/waardenburg-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Weissenbacher-Zweymüller syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/weissenbacher-zweymuller-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Health Check Tools

- Do You Need a Hearing Test? [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/do-you-need-hearing-test>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/es/espanol/necesita-una-prueba-de-audicion-preguntas-interactivas>]

Videos and Tutorials

- Hearing and the cochlea [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000063.htm>]  (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000063.htm>]

Statistics and Research

- Quick Statistics about Hearing [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-hearing>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
- Statistics about Hearing, Balance, Ear Infections and Deafness [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
- Treating Hearing Loss to Help Brain Health [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2023/10/treating-hearing-loss-help-brain-health>]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/tratar-la-perdida-auditiva-para-ayudar-a-la-salud-del>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Deafness [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Deafness%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Hearing Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Hearing+Disorders%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Presbycusis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Presbycusis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Improving Outcomes of Single-Sided Deaf Cochlear Implant Users by Reducing Interaural... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40739862>]
- Article: Unexplored strains and job satisfaction for individuals with visual and auditory... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40731401>]
- Article: Preliminary study on the neural mechanisms of four tone recognition in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40717154>]
- Hearing Disorders and Deafness -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Deafness%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Hearing+Disorders%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+human+s%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Reference Desk

- Glossary [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/glossary>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)

Find an Expert

- Directory of Organizations [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/directory>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
- Find an Audiologist [<https://members.audiology.org/cvweb/cgi-bin/memberdll.dll/info?wpr=find-an-audiologist.htm>] (American Academy of Audiology)
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov>] 

Children

- Hearing Loss (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hearing-loss.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/hearing-loss.html>]

Older Adults

- Age-Related Hearing Loss [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/age-related-hearing-loss>]  (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/es/espanol/perdida-de-audicion-relacionada-con-la-edad>]
- Hearing Loss: A Common Problem for Older Adults [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/hearing-and-hearing-loss/hearing-loss-common-problem-older-adults>]  (National Institute on Aging)

Patient Handouts

- Acoustic trauma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001061.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001061.htm>]
- Age-related hearing loss [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001045.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001045.htm>]
- Audiometry [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003341.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003341.htm>]
- Ear examination [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003340.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003340.htm>]
- Hearing loss [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003044.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003044.htm>]
- Occupational hearing loss [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001048.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001048.htm>]
- Otosclerosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001036.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001036.htm>]
- Sensorineural deafness [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003291.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003291.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Acoustic trauma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001061.htm>]
- Age-related hearing loss [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001045.htm>]
- Aging changes in the senses [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/004013.htm>]
- Alport syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000504.htm>]
- Audiometry [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003341.htm>]
- BAER - brainstem auditory evoked response [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003926.htm>]
- Caloric stimulation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003429.htm>]

[Ear examination](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003340.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003340.htm]

[Hearing and the cochlea](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000063.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000063.htm]

[Hearing loss](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003044.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003044.htm]

[Hearing loss and music](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000495.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000495.htm]

[Living with hearing loss](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000360.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000360.htm]

[Occupational hearing loss](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001048.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001048.htm]

[Otosclerosis](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001036.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001036.htm]

[Sensorineural deafness](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003291.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003291.htm]

[Talking to someone with hearing loss](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000361.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000361.htm]

[Waardenburg syndrome](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001428.htm) [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001428.htm]

Related Health Topics

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[Cochlear Implants](https://medlineplus.gov/cochlearimplants.html) [https://medlineplus.gov/cochlearimplants.html]

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[Hearing Problems in Children](https://medlineplus.gov/hearingproblemsinchildren.html) [https://medlineplus.gov/hearingproblemsinchildren.html]

[Meniere's Disease](https://medlineplus.gov/menieresdisease.html) [https://medlineplus.gov/menieresdisease.html]

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[Speech and Communication Disorders](https://medlineplus.gov/speechandcommunicationdisorders.html) [https://medlineplus.gov/speechandcommunicationdisorders.html]

[Tinnitus](https://medlineplus.gov/tinnitus.html) [https://medlineplus.gov/tinnitus.html]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Hearing Disorders and Deafness* is the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English

[https://medlineplus.gov/languages/hearingdisordersanddeafness.html] on *Hearing Disorders and Deafness*

NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

[6 Ways to Communicate Better While You Wear a Mask](https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/6-ways-to-communicate-better-while-you-wear-a-mask) [https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/6-ways-to-communicate-better-while-you-wear-a-mask]

[Deafness Is Not a Burden](https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/deafness-is-not-a-burden) [https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/deafness-is-not-a-burden]

[Loud and Clear: What to Know About Hearing Loss](https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/loud-and-clear-what-to-know-about-hearing-loss) [https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/loud-and-clear-what-to-know-about-hearing-loss]

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