

THE LINK BETWEEN DIABETES AND HEARING LOSS

by Kristin Johnston BA, BC-HIS & Carli Van Harken, HIS
Owners of Comprehensive Ear & Hearing

How often do you ask your diabetic patients about their hearing? A recent review of studies examining the possible link between diabetes and hearing loss suggests doctors should be having the conversation more often.

Researchers at the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center say that there is strong evidence that diabetes can damage a person's hearing ability and that doctors should be testing the hearing of their patients with type 2 diabetes.

"An association between diabetes and hearing impairment in human subjects has been shown in many, but not all, studies," SUNY Assistant Professor Elizabeth Helzner said in a news release about the survey. "Direct comparison of these studies is complicated due to a lack of consistency in defining hearing impairment and other factors."

One theory as to how diabetes could affect hearing is that high blood glucose levels may damage the tiny blood vessels in the inner ear, similar to the way diabetes can damage the kidneys, heart or eyes.

The research survey, which was published earlier this year in the journal *Current Diabetes Reports*, found a stronger correlation between diabetes and hearing impairment in studies that focused on younger patients. Helzner said older patients may have age-related hearing loss, which could mask the effect diabetes may be having on their auditory system.

"This factor in itself lends weight to the notion that type 2 diabetes can damage hearing," she said.

Research has yet to prove that diabetes causes hearing loss, but the correlation is there. The SUNY team said that more studies are needed to determine whether those with diabetes are at an increased risk for early onset hearing impairment and whether the effects on hearing vary by the status of the disease or use of disease management practices.

Hearing loss and diabetes are challenges faced by large portions of the population. More than 16 percent of adults in the U.S. have some form of hearing loss and more than 29 million people, or 9.3 percent of the U.S. population, have diabetes.

Research results reviewed by the SUNY team show that hearing loss is twice as common in people with diabetes than in those without the disease. And among the 86 million people in the U.S. who are diagnosed with prediabetes, the rate of hearing loss is 30 percent higher than those without the diagnosis.

The ramifications of hearing loss go beyond simply having to ask people to speak up. Hearing impairment has been associated with social isolation, depression, cognitive decline, dementia, a higher likelihood for falls and hospitalizations and increased mortality.

Just as diabetes can be managed, hearing impairment can, too, especially when detected early. If you suspect one of your patients may be experiencing hearing loss, recommend a hearing evaluation.

Comprehensive Ear & Hearing will be happy to provide an evaluation free of charge in any of our offices.

Sources:

- http://www.downstate.edu/news_releases/2016/news_release_full11.html
- American Diabetes Association



Terry DeGroot, M.D.

Dr. Terry DeGroot is available at all three Comprehensive Ear & Hearing locations for medical ear & hearing care including cerumen management.

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Hearing loss isn't just an ear issue, it's a quality of life and health issue.

It can occur for natural reasons, but other causes might surprise you.



Older adults*

with impaired hearing may have a **shorter lifespan** than their peers without hearing problems.¹

*70 years and older



People* with a hearing loss experience a **30-40% faster decline in cognitive abilities** compared to peers without hearing loss.²

*75 years and older



People with low-frequency hearing loss are considered **at risk** for cardiovascular events.³

Adults with untreated hearing loss **are more likely to develop dementia.**⁴



There is a significant association between **high blood pressure and untreated hearing loss.**⁷



People with mild hearing loss **are 3x more likely** to have a history of falling.⁸



90-95%

of people with hearing loss can be treated with hearing aids.⁹

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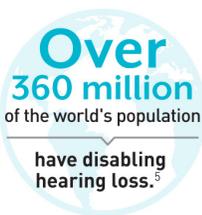
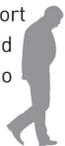
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Adults with untreated hearing loss

were more likely to report depression, anxiety and paranoia than peers who wore hearing aids.⁴

*50 years and older



Kristin Johnston, BA, BC-HIS, Owner



Carli Van Harken, HIS, Owner



Cari Marzolf, MA, CCC-A, Audiologist

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