

# Talking to a loved one about hearing loss!



Comprehensive  
**EAR & HEARING**

Grand Haven • Holland • Zeeland



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Hearing loss is the third most common chronic physical condition in the United States, more widespread than diabetes or cancer, afflicting 20 percent of Americans over the age of 12, or about 48 million people.

**For a condition so widespread, why is it so hard to talk about?**

One reason is **the person with hearing loss is often the last to notice**. That means it often falls to a loved one to bring it to their attention. Hearing loss affects everyone differently and it can be a tough situation to come to terms with – for the person experiencing it, as well as their communicating partners.

**The effects of hearing loss are not limited to the person who has it. It touches the lives of spouses, family members, friends and coworkers.** It is frustrating to repeat things over and over, and it can be heartbreaking to see someone you care about isolate themselves from people and activities they love.

Not only is hearing loss frustrating for all involved, it also can be dangerous. Alarms, warnings and signs of danger can be missed, leading to injury.

**Convincing a loved one to seek help, even if it's not always easy, is the right thing to do.** The benefits of discussing and treating hearing loss far outweigh the discomfort of the conversation.

Follow this guide to learn the signs of hearing loss, why it is so important to treat it, and how to make an action plan that works for everyone. You and your loved one will be glad you did.

*Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, April 22, 2016, U.S. Centers for Disease Control  
"One in Five Americans Has Hearing Loss," Johns Hopkins Medicine, Nov. 14, 2011*



## How hearing loss affects relationships

**Hearing connects us to those we love. Even before we are born, we learn to recognize our mother's voice.**

A hearing loss disrupts these important connections. Research shows that people who do not treat their hearing loss often grow increasingly isolated. Consider an example of how this can occur over time:

The first time grandma asks how school is going, we give her a normal answer. She asks us to repeat what we said, and we give her a shortened version. By the third time she asks us, we roll our eyes and grunt, "Fine, thanks."

And just like that, the person with hearing loss is left out of the conversation. (Now multiply that scenario several times a day!)

Those little interactions — the conversations that happen throughout the day — are important to strengthening overall relationships. In survey after survey, people acknowledge improved or positive effects on relationships with family and friends after being treated for hearing loss.

**It is important to understand that the person with hearing loss is often the last to realize how much their hearing has changed. Hearing loss is gradual. It sneaks up on you little by little. People experiencing the symptoms usually fall into one of two categories:**

1. They are oblivious to their symptoms and don't realize the impact their hearing loss is having on their quality of life and relationships.
2. They are in denial. They realize they are asking others to repeat themselves more often and turning up the TV louder and louder, but they believe the change is in others: "People don't talk as clearly as they used to. Everybody on TV just mumbles."

Hearing loss is an emotional and physical journey. The hard-of-hearing person needs to overcome stereotypes and their own fears and push past societal assumptions. Sometimes, it's easier to deny the problem. This kind of denial can be frustrating for family members, especially when they're asked to take up the slack by speaking louder, repeating things, or relaying something that was said by another.

Whether your loved one is oblivious to their hearing loss or is in denial, the first step to regaining quality of life is to have a hearing test.

## Putting it in perspective

No one looks forward to getting a flu shot, a hip replacement or dental work. But we also don't want to be sick, struggle to walk or be unable to chew our food. In other words, we may not enjoy medical treatments, but we want our health problems solved.

Hearing loss presents a similar choice. Nobody looks forward to getting hearing aids, yet they are a highly effective solution to a significant health problem.

In fact, hearing loss is one of the most easily managed health conditions we face. Hearing aids are effective for 85 percent of people with hearing problems. They are a simple, painless solution with no side effects, and they produce results almost immediately.

Compared to other chronic health conditions many suffer, hearing loss is an easily treatable condition that results in improved quality of life. And yet, because hearing loss is so gradual, some people choose to live with it rather than seek help.



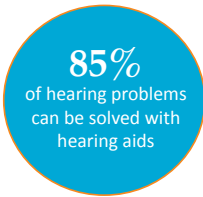
Sources: Better Hearing Institute  
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# Why Does Everybody Mumble?

If you have a loved one with hearing loss, this article is probably familiar.

*The following is an abbreviated adaptation of an article by Susan Seliger: “The New York Times”.*



85%  
of hearing problems  
can be solved with  
hearing aids

While visiting my parents recently, I overheard a conversation between them that went something like this.

Mom, in the dining room: “Did you take out the trash?”

Dad, in the living room: “I have plenty of cash. What do you need money for?”

“What? I don’t want any money.”

“Why did you ask for it?”

“What did you say? You’re mumbling again.”

I felt as if I was in the middle of that Abbott and Costello routine. The only difference is that after a while, the daily misunderstandings and frustrations of having to repeat yourself become a lot less funny. When I suggested to my parents that they might want to get their hearing tested, their first reaction (after exasperated sighs) was that they didn’t want to be bothered. Turns out, they have a lot of company.

“The average person has been having trouble hearing for 7 to 10 years before they come in — they say it’s only been a few months, but we’ve found it’s years,” said Dr. Eric Hagerberg, an audiologist in Youngstown, Ohio, and president of the Academy of Doctors of Audiology. Of the 26.7 million people over age 50 with a hearing impairment, only one in seven, a meager 14 percent, use a hearing aid, said Dr. Frank Lin, assistant professor of otolaryngology and epidemiology at Johns Hopkins University. “If you think you have a hearing loss, you probably do,” he said.

Why so much resistance to getting hearing impairment diagnosed and treated? First, denial. Many older adults just don’t think they have a problem. The person with a hearing problem is often the last to notice it, because the change comes on gradually over years and starts subtly. Adults with hearing loss typically say, “I can hear just fine if people would just stop mumbling.” They’re half right. It isn’t that they can’t hear — they can. The problem is that they can’t understand. The first clue to a hearing impairment is mixing up consonants. Age-related hearing loss often occurs in the high-frequency ranges that, in English, tend to carry the consonants.

Many older adults think it’s normal to lose some hearing ability. If a majority of older people have hearing loss — and 55 percent of those over age 70 do — then it can’t be that harmful, right? Wrong. Because the ear plays a role in balance, hearing loss can lead to falls. **“Even mild hearing loss can triple the risk of falling,”** said Dr. Lin, citing his own research as well as a study of Finnish twins. And then there is the mysterious link



to dementia. Some studies have suggested that mild hearing loss is linked to a doubling of dementia risk, and that moderate hearing loss can triple it. With severe hearing loss, the risk can be five times as high, according to Dr. Lin's 2011 study in Archives of Neurology and a report last month in The Journal of the American Medical Association. It is possible that hearing loss leads to social isolation, a risk factor for dementia, said Dr. Lin. In addition, **few people realize that delayed treatment may make hearing loss worse.** "If you don't use it, you'll lose it," said Dr. Remensnyder. "I have a retired nurse, age 90, who has lived alone with no auditory stimulation for years. She doesn't understand 50 percent of the words, and I can't reverse that now."

Even among the enlightened, hearing aids still carry a stigma. "Men think, 'It's a sign of weakness,' and women think, 'It's showing my age,'" said Dr. Hagberg. Anyone over 60 remembers when the words "deaf and dumb" were always uttered together – and "dumb" was not used to mean "mute." Vanity, too, is still a deterrent. But that may be receding now that new hearing aids are smaller and less visible than ever. Besides, it's increasingly commonplace to see young and old alike walking around with devices plugged into their ears.

"I tell patients who deny they have a problem, even after testing, to go home and pay attention to every time they say, 'What?' or they miss the punchline on TV or ask people to repeat something," said Dr. Hagberg. Primary care doctors often fail to test for hearing loss. It helps to line up a team of hearing care professionals who are patient and passionate about working with the elderly. Interview hearing care providers until you find one you like.

A majority of those who finally get hearing aids — and do the necessary follow-up visits — experience positive results.

"It's thrilling," said Barb Merry, age 68, from Appleton, Wis., describing life after she got hearing aids — "especially the improvement in watching TV." She uses an additional device in the TV area that operates much the way metal induction loops installed in many theaters, concert halls and public institutions do — transmitting sound directly into a telecoil in her hearing aids.

"When I used to watch 'Downton Abbey,' that English series, my understanding was maybe 40 percent at best — I thought the problem was their English accents," Mrs. Merry said. "But now I understand 95 percent. Only 5 percent is the English thing."

She continued, "I want to talk to everyone I know and say, 'Get over the shyness about hearing aids — life can be better.'"

# Signs of hearing loss

**Family and friends can help by being aware of the signs that a loved one may be one of the many people with an undiagnosed hearing deficit. Indicators include:**

## Social isolation

A person stops coming to family events or doesn't answer the phone anymore. It can be painful for this person to be left out as they watch others talk and laugh together, unable to join in or follow the conversation. When someone grows more disconnected at family and social events, keeping to themselves, this could be a sign they can't hear or understand what is being said.

## Turning up the volume

An easily recognizable sign of hearing loss is when a person listens to television, radio, or computer at a very high volume that others find uncomfortable.

## Asking 'what?'

Are conversations littered with the word "what?" With some types of hearing loss, the listener presumes the speaker is mumbling. Words sound distorted. The conclusion is that the speaker is not enunciating their words, so the response is a request to repeat what was said: "What?" If you notice that word pops up more than it used to, it could be time for a conversation about getting their hearing checked.

## Frequent mishaps

Is it clumsiness or hearing loss? If someone seems to be losing their balance, stumbling often, or simply having trouble walking, this could be a sign of hearing trouble. The inner ear is the center of our balance system. This is why many hearing-impaired people also have difficulty with balance.

## Responding inappropriately

Does someone laugh at the wrong time in a conversation, or respond inappropriately? This may seem like an odd question, but it is a good indicator of a hearing deficit. People don't often like to admit they have a difficulty, so they mask it by pretending to understand what is said. They may offer positive responses, even when the moment doesn't call for them.

**The signs of hearing loss can be subtle. Being able to recognize them is a way to help.**



WHAT?



# Did you know

that your hearing health has a direct effect on your overall health and well-being?



## Tinnitus

Up to 90% of people with tinnitus have never been induced to a hearing clinic

## Osteoporosis

Older people with sensory patterns of slow dryness have a higher risk of osteoporosis than younger

## Hypertension

High blood pressure and its associated risk factors are linked to hearing loss



## Obesity

Hypertension, which is linked to obesity, is associated with a higher risk of hearing loss



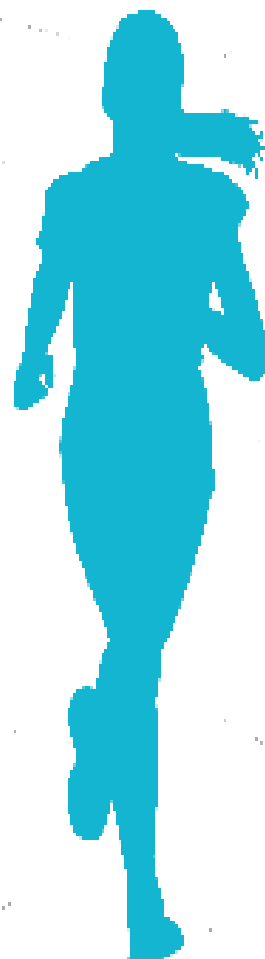
## Safety/Balance

People with mild hearing loss are 30% more likely to fall than those with no hearing loss



## Isolation

Unmet hearing needs can lead to social isolation and a higher risk of depression



## Cognitive Decline

Adults with hearing loss score 10-15% lower on tests of cognitive function

10 years or more

## Depression



People with hearing loss are 2-3 times more likely to experience depression than those with normal hearing

## Eye Health



People with hearing loss are 2-3 times more likely to experience eye health issues

## Heart Health

People with hearing loss are 2-3 times more likely to experience heart health issues

## Smoking



People with hearing loss are 2-3 times more likely to experience smoking-related issues

## Diabetes



People with hearing loss are 2-3 times more likely to experience diabetes-related issues



## Ototoxicity

People with hearing loss are 2-3 times more likely to experience ototoxicity-related issues

People with hearing loss are 2-3 times more likely to experience ototoxicity-related issues

1. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. (2019). Hearing loss and its impact on health. Retrieved from <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/publication/hearing-loss-and-its-impact-on-health>

# Reasons to treat hearing loss early

Hearing decline is hazardously sneaky. It creeps up through the years, so gradually it's hardly noticeable, making it all too easy to deny it's happening. And when the symptoms are obvious and acknowledged, it can be shrugged off as a bothersome condition to be tolerated.

But for the 48 million Americans with some level of hearing loss, the negative effects are significantly greater than just inconvenience and frustration. Here are eight reasons why untreated hearing loss is a great deal more dangerous than you might believe:

## 1. Connection to dementia

A study from Johns Hopkins University and the National Institute on Aging shows that individuals with untreated hearing loss are considerably more likely to suffer from dementia compared with people who retain their ability to hear or treat their hearing loss. Research shows that treating hearing loss in midlife is the single greatest change a person can make to lower their risk of dementia.

## 2. Depression and social isolation

Research shows a strong link between hearing loss and moderate to severe depression. Scientists from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders said this was especially true for women. Another study, by the National Council on Aging, found that people with hearing loss who don't use hearing aids are less likely to participate in social activities.

## 3. Safety

Your hearing plays a critical role in keeping you and your loved ones safe. Even a mild hearing loss reduces situational awareness – and can make it difficult to hear important announcements, a fire alarm, an approaching vehicle, or a loved-one's call for help. Untreated hearing loss poses an elevated risk of injury.

## 4. Reduced household income

In a review of more than 40,000 households by the Better Hearing Institute, hearing loss was shown to negatively affect household income by as much as \$12,000 annually, depending on the degree of loss. Individuals who wore hearing aids, however, saw this impact reduced by 50%.

## 5. Auditory deprivation – use it or lose it

As your hearing loss becomes progressively worse, you start to adapt to receiving less sounds and slowly “turn off” that part of your brain. This process is called auditory deprivation. Your auditory system can become less sensitive and worse at understanding the meaning of sounds if it isn't stimulated regularly by audible sounds.



#### 6. Increased risk of falls

Research shows that people with a 25-decibel hearing loss, classified as mild, were roughly three times more likely to have a history of falling. And for every additional 10 decibels of hearing loss, the chances of falling increased by 1.4 times.

#### 7. Being misjudged or misunderstood

Many people attempt to conceal their hearing loss by pretending to follow a conversation, only to respond inappropriately. When they laugh at the wrong time or give an odd answer to a question, their conversation partners will draw their own conclusions. This may have a compounding effect, where others avoid conversation with that person. This has even greater implications for serious conversations, such as at work.

#### 8. Shutting off part of the world

Birds singing in the morning. Leaves rustling in the breeze. The joy of listening to music. Sound contributes to the richness of life – and hearing loss can gradually steal that from us. Seeking treatment earlier rather than later can preserve this connection to the world around us.

For the people who currently enjoy normal hearing, it is critical to care for and preserve it. And for those suffering with hearing loss, it's vital to seek the help of a hearing specialist. Research provides ample reasons to treat hearing loss as soon as possible.

*"Hearing Loss and Dementia Linked in Study," Johns Hopkins Medicine, February 14, 2011*

*"Wearing hearing aids can reduce the risk of cognitive decline," Starkey Hearing Technologies, Sept. 28, 2018*

*"NCID researchers find strong link between hearing loss and depression in adults," National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, March 7, 2014*

*"Untreated Hearing Loss Linked to Depression, Social Isolation in Seniors," American Academy of Audiology*

*"The Impact of Untreated Hearing Loss on Household Income," Better Hearing Institute, May 2007*

*"Hearing Loss Linked to Three-Fold Risk of Falling," Johns Hopkins Medicine, Feb. 27, 2012*

# Strategies for talking to a loved one

**For a condition that affects communication, it's appropriate that addressing hearing loss begins with a conversation. And yet, initiating that conversation can be intimidating.**

It's important to remember: They need our help to improve their lives. Even though it may be obvious a loved one is suffering, research shows that, on average, people who need hearing aids wait more than 10 years after their initial diagnosis to be fitted with their first set.

**Here are some strategies to help you help someone you love:**

## Starting the conversation

That first comment can be the hardest, but it gets easier from there. We suggest starting with an example of a specific hearing event that happened recently. An interaction with friends, child, or a grandchild is often best, because these are things people care about most. Make a simple observation: "Honey, I noticed that you had some trouble following some of the conversation yesterday. It seemed you couldn't understand James very well. Did you notice that, too?"

If the person denies it, blames the situation, or blames the other person, try to keep the focus personal, on what you have noticed: "I know the room was noisy but everyone else was understanding James pretty well. I've noticed this more recently and I wonder if there's been a change in your hearing. I think that's something we need to check out."

If your loved one wants to talk about it then, be sure to listen – but don't push it. Introduce your concern gently but clearly, and then let it rest. An argument at this stage will not encourage them to better hearing.

## Gentle reminders

Once the conversation is started, you can reinforce their awareness by helping them notice instances of hearing difficulty. No one likes to be nagged, but everyone can use a reminder. **Gentle observations like "Dad, you used to hear that sound really well," or "Mom, last year you were understanding my words much better," or "Dear, the TV is so much louder now than it was last year."** Be specific, give a timeline, and do it without blaming or shaming them. You simply want to clue them in over a period of time. Few people with hearing problems report a "hearing loss," but almost everyone will admit they have "difficulty understanding."

A very common refrain is, "I hear you fine, but I simply don't understand some of your words." So, as you talk with your loved one, use phrases such as **"understanding issues,"** or **"a change in understanding ability,"** or even **"a shift in hearing or understanding."**

Using “hearing loss” may only push some away from finding out about the problem.

### **Encourage and embrace research**

Changes in hearing are like other bodily changes – like vision, or that slight loss of motion in the fingers – just a normal bodily change over time. Yet people respond to hearing decline with strong denial, as if it represents a personal failing. This is where articles and research about ear and hearing health can be helpful. Our website, [www.CompEar-Hear.com](http://www.CompEar-Hear.com), features blogs and news sections with a variety of updated references about the medical and health aspects of hearing loss. Scientific information can often cast the hearing change in a more realistic light.

### **Remind them they have nothing to lose – and so much to gain**

Too often people focus on the “loss” and not the “hearing,” too much on “the appliance” of hearing aids and not enough on the power of restored hearing. Focus on the benefits of treatment, and be specific. Instead of just saying “you’ll hear better,” provide real-life examples. Remind them that “you’ll be able to hear your granddaughter sing in church,” or “when Uncle John tells that joke you love, you’ll be able to hear every word.”

### **Try an online hearing test**

This is a great way to ease your loved one into the idea of testing for hearing loss. He or she may not be ready to make an appointment to see a hearing care professional. Instead, try an online hearing test, such as the one available at [www.starkey.com](http://www.starkey.com). Answering five short questions and listening to a series of tones takes only a few minutes and can help give you both an idea of any hearing loss issues that might require professional attention.

### **Offer to schedule a hearing consultation – and attend with them**

After your initial conversation and gentle reminders and exposure to reading and information, you can more firmly suggest to just get “a hearing check.” If it helps convince them to follow through, offer to accompany them. The consultation is nonthreatening, has nothing to do with buying a hearing aid or talking to a salesman, and is certainly not a painful medical procedure. Just a “hearing check” to “get a baseline about your hearing.” It’s simple, easy and FREE at Comprehensive Ear & Hearing.

**Once you start the conversation and get your loved one help, you’ll both be able to better enjoy life.**

**We have heard it hundreds of times from new users of hearing aids: “I wish I would have done this years ago. My hearing is so much better and I’m not even aware of wearing the hearing aids.”**

**We owe it to those we love to discover this simple solution.**

# Six ways hearing aids can improve quality of life



Hearing aid users reported **significant improvements in their relationships** at home, sense of independence, and social and sex life.

**Hearing aids offer one of the easiest ways to improve quality of life. Here are some of the benefits of getting a hearing test and using professionally fitted hearing aids.**

## 1. Strengthen ties with family and friends

Healthy relationships rest largely on good communication. In multiple surveys, respondents report that hearing aids resulted in a better quality of life and improved relationships. In one survey, 7 out of 10 said having hearing aids improved their relationships with those closest to them.

## 2. Raise your spirits

People with untreated hearing loss often feel angry, frustrated, anxious, isolated and depressed. But research shows that when they use hearing aids, they become more socially engaged, feel a greater sense of safety and independence, and see a general improvement in their overall quality of life.

## 3. Feel better about yourself

An important benefit of using hearing aids can be enhanced emotional well-being. Research shows that when people with hearing loss use hearing aids, many feel more in control of their lives and less self-critical. One study found that the majority of people with mild and severe hearing loss felt better about themselves and life overall as a result of using hearing aids.

## 4. Keep your mind sharp

Studies out of Johns Hopkins linked hearing loss with accelerated cognitive decline in older adults and found that seniors with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop dementia over time. Other studies found that many people with hearing loss report improvements in their cognitive skills with the use of hearing aids.

## 5. Unleash your earning potential

Hearing your best at work helps you do your best. One study found that using hearing aids reduced the risk of income loss by 90 to 100 percent for those with milder hearing loss, and from 65 to 77 percent for those with severe to moderate hearing loss. And people with hearing loss who use hearing aids are more likely to be employed than their peers who don't.

## 6. Improved safety

Our ears keep us safe in a number of ways, from alerting us to a car coming around a corner to letting us know that the oven timer is beeping. Hearing aids have been proven to increase personal safety, both at home and out of doors, even reducing the risk of falls and other accidents.

*"WebMD study confirms that hearing aids can improve the wearer's quality of life," Starkey Hearing Technologies, May 17, 2017*  
*"Financial Danger of Leaving Hearing Loss Un-addressed," Disabled World, Feb. 23, 2011*

Sources: American Academy of Audiology  
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## Make an appointment: What to expect

**Once you have convinced your loved one to recognize their hearing loss and take steps to address it, the rest is easy.**

Simply call **(616) 847-3144** to **schedule your free initial hearing consultation** with the professionals at Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. This is how the process works:

### Discussion of hearing problems

We'll ask questions about how hearing loss is affecting your loved one's overall quality of life. We want to know which situations create the most frustration. We encourage a family member to also come to this appointment – who can help identify specific instances of how the hearing decline is affecting others.

This discussion also will include a history of ear health and related concerns to identify any medical issues that may be contributing to the hearing decline.

### Hearing evaluation

We will visually examine the ears and then administer a series of hearing tests to measure both the capabilities and limits of hearing. We will measure the softest sounds your loved one can identify, as well as the upper limits of hearing range. We'll also compare the ability to understand speech at normal listening levels vs. the preferred listening level. We sometimes include testing in background noise or with challenging listening simulations. These tests generally last 45 minutes.

### Discuss results

Once the nature and extent of hearing loss is known, we will discuss it in terms that are easy to understand. Our hearing professional will walk through the results, which will be illustrated in an audiogram. We'll also explain how the results directly relate to everyday situations that may be causing frustration.

### Recommended plan for next steps

Lastly, we lay out options for solving the hearing situation. Those options will be one of the following:

- Nothing, because there's not enough hearing loss to require action. We may suggest monitoring and re-evaluating in another couple of years.
- Medical referral, if we locate a treatable cause for hearing loss that needs to be addressed with medication or surgery.
- Discussion about hearing aids, if hearing has declined enough that an improved quality of life can be achieved with hearing aids.

## Finding the right fit

**No two people are the same. If your loved one needs hearing aids, we will want to know more about their listening needs.**

Modern hearing technology comes in all forms, sizes, shapes and colors. It is important to find the right fit that addresses each person's listening needs while applying the findings from the examination.

We account for what is possible with hearing and will recommend devices that will realistically return hearing to a useful, comfortable level. We choose from the largest hearing aid brands, each with unique styles and multiple levels of technology.

### A 'test drive' for better hearing

At Comprehensive Ear & Hearing, we allow use of selected hearing aids for a 60-day "test drive."

Our clients use the hearing aids in their own environments and experience exactly how well they return hearing to clear levels. We provide specific guidance for wearing, caring for and adapting to the aids to ensure the best hearing possible. We schedule returns visits during this period to adjust sound levels as the new wearer adapts to improved hearing.

At the end of 60 days, the brain has adapted to the new levels of sound and the wearer will know exactly how much the new hearing aids help. If they are pleased with some of the improvement but not everything, we may recommend additional time with other hearing aids.

In the end, anyone not happy with their hearing instruments can simply return the hearing aids for a 100% money-back guarantee.\* We want people to enjoy better hearing – but if hearing aids aren't offering that improvement, then they are not required to keep them.

*\* less credit card processing fee if credit card is used.*



# About Comprehensive Ear & Hearing

## Our philosophy

At comprehensive Ear & Hearing of Grand Haven, our commitment is to provide you with the best hearing possible. We understand that your hearing connects you to your loved ones and the world around you. Better hearing IS better living and that is why we have created a state-of-the-art hearing practice that is centered around you. We are always on the leading edge of technology to offer you the best in the industry in both hearing technology and testing. Our providers are committed to your total satisfaction and will deliver you the care that we would want our own families to receive.

Comprehensive Ear & Hearing has been locally owned and serving West Michigan for over three decades. Comprehensive care is a cornerstone of our practice, not just a name. This is reflected in our highly trained professional staff that includes licensed hearing instrument specialists, an audiologist and an ENT doctor. Our clinic is open five days a week with evening appointments available for your convenience.

The longer you wait, the more difficult hearing loss is to treat. We invite you to call us at **(616) 847-3144** - Grand Haven or **(616) 772-1986** - Zeeland for a **FREE hearing test**. You'll learn more about our practice and how we can help you reconnect to what you've been missing.

## Giving back

Comprehensive Ear & Hearing partners with the Starkey Hearing Foundation, to provide hearing aids to those in our community who cannot afford them. We contribute a portion of each hearing aid sold, and gather funds from local endowments in order to underwrite this free hearing aid program. Since 2008, we have provided more \$600,000 worth of hearing instruments and services to deserving community members. We believe strongly that the health of our communities are made better when its members can hear their best. Learn more about our mission at [www.Compearhear.com](http://www.Compearhear.com).

## Our team

**Kristin Johnston** is the owner of Comprehensive Ear & Hearing of Grand Haven and also is a Board Certified Hearing Instrument Specialist (BC-HIS). She is a graduate of Hope College and has been a hearing professional in west Michigan since 1997.

**Carli Van Harken** is the owner and Hearing Instrument Specialist at Comprehensive Ear & Hearing of Zeeland. She is certified with the International Hearing Society. She truly enjoys the opportunity to work one-on-one with her clients, helping connect them and reconnect them with their families and friends through better hearing. "Most days it feels like I'm going to see a bunch of old friends, and I think: That's a very good feeling."

**Cari Marzolf** is a licensed audiologist with a bachelor's and master's degree from Central Michigan University. She loves the fact that CEH is a small, locally owned company where the customers are seen as the heart of the business. "I like to make improvements in their quality of life," she said. "I put hearing aids on them, and they just brighten up. You can tell by the look on their face that they're hearing much better."

**Dr. Terry R. DeGroot** is certified by the American Board of Otolaryngology. He provides medical input and care for current and potential hearing instrument users, including cerumen management and examination and treatment of ear canal and hearing concerns.

## Hear what our clients are saying

"I didn't get my hearing aids from Comprehensive Ear & Hearing.

I went to the other guy. The one with all the coupons. I thought I could save a few bucks. The office was great - until I paid for my hearing aids. I was having trouble with my hearing aids, soon after I received them, but getting in for help was difficult, I had to wait weeks. Once I did get in, very little was done to help me. I was told no further adjustments could be made.

After weeks of frustration, I stopped into Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. They got me in later that week and made a few adjustments to the aids. I hear so much better now.

I told Carli how much I paid for my aids - AFTER the coupons. Come to find out, the Comprehensive Ear & Hearing price was less for the exact same aids - no coupons needed!

I learned my lesson! Go to Comprehensive Ear and Hearing for your hearing needs. They have great prices and even better service!"

J. S. - Allendale, MI

"For me, having my hearing instruments has brought me back to the world. I'm extremely happy and satisfied with the service I receive from Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. Thank you for reconnecting me to everyone I care for and love!"

M. V. - Zeeland, MI

"There is absolutely no one with as much compassion, kindness and knowledge as Cari. A visit to her office is just like the old days where you never feel rushed."

B. L. - Holland, MI

"I have total confidence that I'm getting the highest quality service at a fair price."

B. P. - Holland, MI

"Carli was very friendly and made me feel she was interested in my hearing problem.

There was no pressure to buy anything as I found in another office. My hearing aids fit well and are really changing my world!"

J. E. - Zeeland, MI

"I am on my second pair of hearing aids now and I am very pleased to have chosen Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. Between the great quality of the hearing aids and the great support service I receive along with free batteries for the life of the hearing aids, I think they are the best deal you will find out there."

R. W. - Jenison, MI

"I don't recall how many years I have been coming to Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. All of my visits have been great! Cari has been very patient with testing and helping me understand how I can help myself hear my best!"

P. S. - Hudsonville, MI

"From the moment we walk into the office, everyone is so friendly, patient and kind. The service is great. Thanks to Cari's time and patience, I was able to enjoy my special party!"

B. B. - Holland, MI

## Hear what our clients are saying

"Your entire team is incredible from Nancy answering the phone to Kristin explaining all facets of hearing instruments to Cadan's orientation and advice to Brenda's calm and friendly attitude! You are all awesome and I will recommend Comprehensive Ear & Hearing to all my friends whenever I can." J. P. - Grand Haven

"The Comprehensive Ear & Hearing team is great! I really appreciate them staying late to work around my work schedule." M. D. - Spring Lake

"We are so happy we finally decided to make an appointment with Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. We didn't know I had so much hearing loss. The staff is very friendly and knowledgeable and I enjoyed Dr. DeGroot. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can HEAR today!" M. S. - Muskegon

"The best part of our week is spending time at church with friends and family. The hearing health care that we receive from Kristin and the team at Comprehensive Ear & Hearing allows us to feel a part of this wonderful family." B. T. - Grand Haven

"Kristin has been my hearing specialist for over 20 years. I have always been happy and feel like I've gotten the best of care." S. P. - Grand Haven

"I am very happy with the way I am treated at Comprehensive Ear & Hearing. Everyone at the office makes me feel very comfortable. When being tested for hearing loss, there was no hard sell to purchase hearing aids. Everything was at my own pace. Thank you for giving me back my hearing! I no longer feel left behind in conversation." C. S. - Muskegon

"I finally gave in and got tested for hearing loss. I was referred to Comprehensive Ear & Hearing by a friend who said he was very pleased with the service he receives from Kristin. The hearing test was explained well and I was able to determine that I could be helped by hearing aids and which pair I wanted based on the information that I was provided. My follow up appointments are very informative and we have been able to fine tune my hearing aids." C. B. - Zeeland

"Expert staff & outstanding product!" B. K. - Muskegon

"I really appreciate the great service. The knowledge of the team is excellent. I was referred by a friend and I'm really glad I chose Comprehensive Ear & Hearing for my hearing needs." K. O. - Hudsonville

Courtesy of:  
Comprehensive Ear & Hearing



## Zeeland

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