

# Hearing loss is not something that happens just to older people

By Danielle Knowlton

A common myth is hearing loss only affects “old people” and it is merely a sign of aging. The majority (65 percent) of people with hearing loss are younger than 65. There are more than 6 million people in the United States between the ages of 18 and 44 with hearing loss, and nearly 1.5 million are school age.

Did you know that untreated hearing loss can not only affect your ability to understand speech, but can also negatively impact your social and emotional well-being and ultimately decrease your quality of life?



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The signs of hearing loss can be subtle and may emerge very slowly, or can be quite significant and come on suddenly. In either case, there are common indications. **Possible social and emotional indications of hearing loss include:**

- Requiring frequent repetition and having difficulty following conversations.
- Thinking words and voices sound muddled or hearing mumbling.

- Having difficulty hearing in noisy situations like restaurants, malls or crowded rooms.
- Answering or responding inappropriately in conversations.
- Having trouble hearing people with higher-pitched voices.
- Hearing ringing in your ears.
- Reading lips or intently watching people's faces when they speak to you.
- Feeling stressed from straining to hear what others are saying.
- Feeling embarrassed about meeting new people or misunderstanding what others say.
- Feeling annoyed at other people because you can't hear or understand them.
- Withdrawing from social situations because of hearing difficulties.

**Physically, many things can contribute to hearing loss:**

- Having a family history of hearing loss.
- Taking medications that can harm the hearing system (ototoxic drugs).
- Having diabetes or heart, circulation or thyroid problems.
- Exposure to very loud sounds over a long period or a single exposure to explosive noise.

In children, hearing issues can cause obstacles with speech and language development and cognitive thinking skills, especially if hearing loss occurs at birth or before speech and language are acquired. They may develop emotional difficulties and low self-esteem. Learning and behavior

problems may arise at school. While most children are screened for hearing loss at birth, hearing loss can occur later, so if there are any concerns, they should be retested.

If you notice any of the signs above, call Barton Audiology or see your primary care physician for a referral. It may just be the best news you've "heard" all day.

If you or a loved one shows signs of hearing loss, make an appointment with Barton Audiology at (530) 543.5815.

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