

## Symptoms of Hearing Loss

Check the symptoms below to see if it's time for a hearing test.

Hearing loss can sneak up on you, starting with a missed word or two and eventually leading to larger gaps in conversations. At first it's a minor inconvenience, but as it worsens, it can be a major roadblock to your ability to interact with others. If you often misunderstand friends and family or find yourself regularly asking people to repeat themselves, your hearing could be putting you at a disadvantage.

And it's not just a physical issue, says Patricia Kricos, president of the American Academy of Audiology and professor of speech language hearing sciences at the University of Florida. Hearing loss can lead to depression because we simply cannot keep up and we end up feeling isolated. At the very least, not being able to hear others can make us downright cranky. If you have any of the symptoms below, it is time to get your hearing checked.

Do you:

- **Prefer to stay at home rather than going to your favorite restaurant?** The noise in public situations can make conversations so difficult you just don't want to bother.
- **Stare at people when they talk?** Your mind may be compensating for the weakness of one sense (hearing) by filling in with another (sight). Looking closely at people helps you "speech read"—understand language by looking at lips and eyes. It also gives you visual clues about their point. If they laugh, you know it's a joke; if they gesture angrily, they're probably talking politics.
- **Stand close to others in a group?** You're probably not trying to get too familiar—you're just getting close enough to hear.
- **Suddenly not see the humor in jokes?** You might not have lost your funny bone—just the ability to hear the punch line. It's difficult to get the point of a story when you miss portions of the dialogue.
- **Crank the volume up on the television to the point that your spouse complains?** Have trouble hearing on the telephone? Hearing loss often shows up first when we try to use electronic gadgets.
- **Complain that others mumble?** If you can hear only part of a person's voice, it may seem that the problem is with them, but your ears may actually be the culprits.
- **Understand men's voices better than women's and children's?** We typically lose the ability to hear high-pitched sounds first and retain an ability to hear lower pitches, such as male voices.

If any of these sound familiar, check with an audiologist, who can test your hearing and suggest a solution.