



Keeping hearing health front-of-mind in diabetes care

Diabetes is on the rise. And it may be affecting people's hearing. Research shows that people with diabetes are about twice as likely to develop hearing loss.

For [American Diabetes Month](#) in November and [World Diabetes Day](#) on November 14, BHI is raising awareness of the link and is urging healthcare professionals and people with diabetes to include hearing tests as part of their annual regimen of care.

Please feel free to adapt the press release below for your practice and local media and to share it with healthcare professionals in your community. You may even consider reaching out to a local endocrinologist and conducting onsite hearing screenings for their patients at their practice.

There are many ways to help spread the word. And we thank you for taking part!

We invite you to follow BHI on Twitter [@better_hearing](#), and like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/betterhearinginstitute>.

Good Diabetes Management Should Include Hearing Tests, Advises the Better Hearing Institute for American Diabetes Month

Washington, DC, November 4, 2015—Good diabetes management should include annual hearing tests, says the Better Hearing Institute (BHI), and suggests five habits for healthier hearing for people with diabetes. [Research](#) shows that people with diabetes are about twice as likely to develop hearing loss. Yet hearing tests are frequently overlooked in routine diabetes care. In fact, some experts believe that hearing loss may be an under-recognized complication of diabetes. (<http://ow.ly/DuVyB>)

To help promote awareness of the connection between diabetes and hearing loss, BHI is offering a free, quick, and confidential online hearing check at www.BetterHearing.org. Anyone can take the online survey to determine if they need a comprehensive hearing test by a hearing healthcare professional.

November is [American Diabetes Month](#) and [World Diabetes Day](#) is November 14. (<http://ow.ly/CZQzM> & <http://ow.ly/CZQEm>).

What's the Diabetes-Hearing Health Link?

Hearing depends on small blood vessels and nerves in the inner ear. [Researchers](#) theorize that over time high blood glucose levels can damage these blood vessels and nerves, diminishing the ability to hear. (<http://ow.ly/uCLit>)

Based on the findings of a meta-analysis conducted on the link between diabetes and hearing loss, Professor Hirohito Sone of the Department of Internal Medicine, Niigata University School of Medicine, Niigata, Japan, believes that hearing health should be included in good diabetes management.

"Our findings support routine hearing screenings for people with diabetes starting at an earlier age than for people without the disease," Professor Sone says. "This is very important from a preventive healthcare perspective. We want to stop untreated hearing loss from potentially leading to other health problems, like depression or dementia, which would make the diabetes burden even greater."

The [meta-analysis](#), which looked at 13 studies, found that people with diabetes were 2.15 times more likely to have hearing loss. When broken down by age, it found that younger individuals were at an even greater risk. Those older than 60 with diabetes were 1.58 times more likely to have hearing loss, while the risk for those 60 and younger with the disease was 2.61 times higher. (<http://ow.ly/DpXDv>)

According to Kathleen L. Yaremchuk, M.D., Chair of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit: "A certain degree of hearing loss is common with aging, but it is often accelerated in patients with diabetes, especially if blood-glucose levels are not being controlled."

In a 2012 [study](#), Yaremchuk and colleagues at Henry Ford Hospital found that women between the ages of 60 and 75 with well-controlled diabetes had better hearing than women whose diabetes was poorly controlled. (<http://ow.ly/DCB8K>)

"Our findings really point to the importance of patients controlling their diabetes and paying attention to their hearing health," said Yaremchuk. "Because hearing loss tends to come on gradually, people aren't always fully aware of its significance. But untreated hearing loss can lead to withdrawal, isolation, and leave the individual subject to depression and other cognitive issues."

5 Habits for Healthier Hearing for People with Diabetes

BHI encourages people with diabetes to take care of their hearing by following these five healthy habits:

1. Get a thorough hearing exam every year and watch for signs of hearing loss. You do it for your eyes. Now do it for your ears. See a hearing healthcare professional every year for a thorough hearing examination. If you notice a change in your ability to hear under certain conditions—like at a restaurant or on a conference call—go sooner. And be sure to share the information with your primary care physician and endocrinologist.
2. Use hearing aids, if recommended. Hearing aid technology has advanced radically in recent years. While hearing loss is not reversible, today's hearing aids can dramatically enhance your ability to hear and engage with others—which can make a tremendous difference in your overall quality of life. Many hearing aids are virtually invisible, sitting discreetly and comfortably inside the ear canal. They adjust to all kinds of noise environments and pick up sound from all directions. Best of all, they're wireless. Today's hearing aids stream sound directly from your smartphone, home entertainment system, and other electronics directly into the hearing aid itself—at volumes just right for you. Some are even waterproof.
3. Keep your blood sugar under control. Just as your heart, eye, and nerve health are affected by your blood sugar levels, your hearing health may be as well. Work with your doctor to monitor your blood sugar and take appropriate medicines as prescribed.
4. Maintain a healthy lifestyle. Even for people without diabetes, a healthy lifestyle benefits hearing health. Not smoking, exercising, and maintaining a healthy diet all support your ability to hear. In fact, studies show that [smoking](#) and [obesity](#) increase the risk of hearing loss, while [regular physical activity](#) helps protect against it. (<http://ow.ly/DbkDZ> & <http://ow.ly/DbkT9> & <http://ow.ly/Dblcdc>)
5. Use ear protection. Everyone is at risk of noise-induced hearing loss. But using ear protection is one of the best—and simplest—things you can do to preserve your hearing. Carry disposable earplugs with you, especially when you know you'll be somewhere noisy. Use appropriate ear protection in loud work environments. Keep the volume on smartphones and other electronics low. Limit your use of headphones and ear buds. And get in the habit of quickly plugging your ears with your fingers and walking away if a loud noise takes you by surprise. Most of all, limit your time in noisy environments.

For more information on hearing loss, visit www.BetterHearing.org.

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