



Prevalence of Hearing Loss

In order to gauge the number of people with hearing loss in the United States, 80,000 members of the National Family Opinion (NFO) panel were surveyed. The last BHI survey (2004) estimated that 31.5 million people report a hearing difficulty; that is around 10% of the U.S. population. So if you have a hearing loss, you are not alone. Here are some general guidelines regarding the incidence of hearing loss:

- 3 in 10 people over age 60 have hearing loss;
- 1 in 6 baby boomers (ages 41-59), or 14.6%, have a hearing problem;
- 1 in 14 Generation Xers (ages 29-40), or 7.4%, already have hearing loss;
- At least 1.4 million children (18 or younger) have hearing problems;
- It is estimated that 3 in 1,000 infants are born with serious to profound hearing loss

Consequences of Untreated Hearing Loss

Many people are aware that their hearing has deteriorated but are reluctant to seek help. Perhaps they don't want to acknowledge the problem, are embarrassed by what they see as a weakness, or believe that they can "get by" without using a hearing aid. And, unfortunately, too many wait years, even decades, before getting treatment.

But time and again, research demonstrates the considerable negative social, psychological, cognitive and health effects of untreated hearing loss . . . with far-reaching implications that go well beyond hearing alone. In fact, those who have difficulty hearing can experience such distorted and incomplete communication that it seriously impacts their professional and personal lives, at times leading to isolation and withdrawal.

Studies have linked untreated hearing loss to:

- irritability, negativism and anger
- fatigue, tension, stress and depression
- avoidance or withdrawal from social situations
- social rejection and loneliness
- reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety
- impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks
- reduced job performance and earning power
- diminished psychological and overall health

Hearing loss is not just an ailment of old age. It can strike at any time and any age, even childhood. For the young, even a mild or moderate case of hearing loss could bring difficulty learning, developing speech and building the important interpersonal skills necessary to foster self-esteem and succeed in school and life.

At the Better Hearing Institute, our mission is to help educate the public and medical profession about hearing loss and promote the importance of prevention and treatment. At our website www.betterhearing.org, you will find basic information about hearing loss, including advances in diagnosis and treatment, a review of different hearing aids, and resources for medical care and financial assistance.