

## Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults and can lead to social withdrawal or be mistaken for dementia.

**About 33%** of Americans 65 to 74 years of age and 47% of those 75 and older have hearing loss.

**Presbycusis** comes on gradually as a person ages and mostly affects people over 50; it makes it difficult for a person to tolerate loud sounds or hear what others are saying.

**Tinnitus** is the ringing, hissing, or roaring sound in the ears frequently caused by exposure to loud noise or certain medicines. It is common in older adults.

**Depression** and withdrawal affect older people who can't hear well; they feel frustrated or embarrassed about not understanding what is being said.

**Otitis media** can lead to long-term hearing loss if it is not treated.

**Some hearing aids** can be plugged into TVs, stereos, microphones, and personal FM systems to help people hear better.

**Confusion** or uncooperativeness can be mistaken for dementia when they may be caused by hearing loss.

**Certain antibiotics** are ototoxic.

## Reference

Information provided by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Senior Health. Hearing loss. Frequently asked questions. NIH Senior Health Web site. <http://nihseniorhealth.gov>. Accessed January 21, 2008.

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