

information sheet

Save your hearing!- 10 top tips

Your hearing is vital for learning, communication and safety. Yet possibly, you've never thought much about the impact a hearing loss could have on your life.

You may think that losing some sound wouldn't be too bad. But those with hearing loss will tell you it can be tiring, lonely and frustrating.

Hearing loss can be caused by many different things. It can happen gradually or quite suddenly. When hearing loss is gradual, it's very easy to ignore—for a while.

Prevention is always better than a cure. And some hearing problems have no cure.

So follow the 10 top tips to help prevent hearing loss.

And always seek help quickly for any ear problems.

What's so bad about hearing loss?

Damage to your hearing isn't life-threatening. But hearing loss can dramatically affect your quality of life. Just think about it. With hearing loss, could you

- Fully enjoy your favourite music?
- Hear the early morning bird song or the waves pounding the shores?
- Share stories with friends at a noisy social gathering, café or bar?

Luckily, there's plenty you can do to help reduce the risk of hearing loss.

10 top tips to help prevent hearing loss

1. Get help quickly for hearing loss

If you have a sudden severe hearing loss, see a doctor urgently.

Also visit your doctor if you have some hearing loss, and your hearing doesn't return to normal within two days.

2. Don't put things into your ears

Never use things like cotton buds, matchsticks or hairgrips to clean or scratch inside your ear. You risk rupturing your eardrum.

The wax inside your ear makes its own way to your outer ear. You can clean your outer ear with a warm flannel.

If you think wax build up is causing hearing loss, see a doctor or specialist ear nurse. They can check and safely remove the wax for you.

3. Try to avoid flying with a heavy cold

If you have a heavy cold, your ears may be unable to clear during changes in air pressure. This could lead to a ruptured eardrum or inner ear damage.

If you must fly, buy a decongestant nasal spray at your local pharmacy. Using the decongestant spray and sucking boiled lollies as the plane starts to descend, may help to reduce the risks.

4. Act quickly on ear infections

If you or your child has an earache or any sort of discharge from an ear, see your doctor.

Earaches are often a sign of an ear infection.

Untreated ear infections can lead to hearing loss.

Keep a careful eye on children up to age 10 as they are more likely to have middle ear problems.

5. Avoid excessive exposure to loud noise

Being exposed to loud noise for a short time will cause temporary hearing loss. The louder the noise, the less time you can listen to it before your hearing is damaged permanently.

There's no cure for the sort of hearing loss caused by noise.

6. Avoid loud music

Listen to music at a sensible volume. Avoid having the volume up too loud for long periods. And take care with the volume on personal stereos—especially when the headphones plug straight into your ears.

7. Use ear protection in noisy environments

Wear safety-approved earplugs or ear muffs when in a noisy environment or doing a noisy job. Use ear protection at home when mowing the lawn or using power tools.

- 8. Never put cotton wool in your ears**
Don't use cotton wool instead of earplugs.
Cotton wool offers no hearing protection at all.
It can also damage the ear if pushed in too far.
- 9. Use water sport protection**
During high-speed water sports like water skiing, always wear a swim cap or approved swimmer's earplugs to keep the water out.

- 10. Dive carefully**
Too much change in air pressure while scuba diving can cause inner ear damage, dizziness and hearing loss. Equalise regularly during descent and ascent.
If you have difficulties, ask a doctor's advice before you dive again.

Are you affected by hearing loss?

To diagnose a hearing loss, you need a professional hearing test.

LIFE Unlimited Hearing Therapists provide free hearing tests all over New Zealand. To find a hearing therapist in your area, call free 0800 008011.

Or you can visit an audiologist. To see a publicly funded audiologist, you need a referral from a doctor or hearing therapist. To see an audiologist privately, just make an appointment.

You can find a private audiologist by looking under **Hearing** in the Yellow Pages phone directory. Or visiting the NZ Audiological Society's website www.audiology.org.nz

But first, consider visiting your doctor or a specialist ear nurse. They can check your ears for problems like excess wax or an undiagnosed ear infection. They can also recommend and refer you to the best professional help for you.

Whatever you do, be sure to seek help promptly. If you just put up with it, your hearing loss may get worse.

Look after your hearing! It helps you learn, communicate and stay safe. Follow the 10 top tips to help prevent hearing loss—and always seek help quickly for any ear problems.

More information & support

NFD (National Foundation for the Deaf)

www.nfd.org.nz

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P O Box 37729, Parnell, Auckland 1151

Ph 0800 867 446

Tel/TTY (09) 307 2922

Fax (09) 307 2923

Email enquiries@nfd.org.nz

The Hearing Association

www.hearing.org.nz

c/- Suite 1, 5 Bouverie Street, Petone

PO Box 5876, Lambton Quay, Wellington 6145

Ph: 0800 233445

Tel: (04) 9396754

Fax: (04) 9396719

Email: enquiries@hearing.org.nz

Hearing Therapists - LIFE Unlimited

www.life.nzl.org

Central House, Level 5

26 Brandon Street, Wellington

Ph 0800 008 011

Tel (04) 499 5851

Fax (04) 499 5853

Email info@life.nzl.org

New Zealand Audiological Society

www.audiology.org.nz

PO Box 9724, Newmarket

Auckland 1149

Ph/Fax 0800 625 166

Email mail@audiology.org.nz

We've prepared these fact sheets using information from external sources and advice from NZ-based experts. Please feel free to copy or use any of the material.

The information, while accurate at time of printing, cannot replace expert advice from a hearing professional. Always seek help quickly for any ear or hearing problem.

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