

Is your hearing going?

What to do about it –
and how we can help

RNID •)))

Changing the world for deaf
and hard of hearing people

We're RNID, the charity
working to change
the world for the UK's
9 million deaf and hard
of hearing people.

www.rnid.org.uk

This leaflet is for you if you think your hearing is not as good as it used to be.

You should read this leaflet if you want to know:

- about the signs of hearing loss
- why people become hard of hearing
- what to do if you think you have a hearing loss
- about help you can get for your hearing loss.

Do any of these situations seem familiar?

- Do other people seem to mumble rather than speak clearly to you?
- Do people often have to repeat things for you before you understand what they say?
- Do you have difficulty understanding what is being said in noisy places, such as pubs or restaurants, even though other people manage to have conversations?
- When you are talking to people in a group, is it hard to keep up with the conversation?
- Do you find it tiring to listen to conversations because you have to concentrate hard?
- Do other people think your television or music is too loud but you cannot hear it properly if they turn it down?
- Do you often have difficulty hearing on the telephone?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may have a hearing loss.

The thought of losing your hearing can be worrying. You might not want to think about it, but the sooner you do something, the better. Did you know that one in seven people in the UK have some level of hearing loss? That's nine million people – so you're not alone.

I think I'm losing my hearing. What should I do?

First, call our telephone hearing check. By phoning **0845 600 55 55** (local rate), you can get an indication of whether you have a hearing loss. The five-minute check can be taken in the comfort of your home.

You listen to sets of three digits and identify them by pressing numbers on your telephone keypad. You will hear full instructions when you call. Because the test relies on changing the level of speech relative to noise, it is not affected by the fact that telephones can differ in volume.

There are three potential results from the sound check, indicating varying levels of hearing or hearing loss. Anyone taking the test will be told what they should do next. If it seems that there is some level of hearing loss, you will be advised to go to your GP to get a referral for a full hearing test.

Remember, if you are at all worried about your ears or hearing, go to your GP.

When you go to your GP, describe your hearing loss and explain how you feel it affects your day-to-day life. Use the questions on page 3 to help you think of times when you have had difficulty hearing. You should also ask if something can be done to help you.

What will the GP do?

Your GP will look in your ears using an instrument called an otoscope to check for obvious problems. It's possible that your hearing loss is due to a build-up of earwax, a cold, or an infection. If so, your GP may be able to treat the cause.

They will also ask you questions about your hearing and family history. They may carry out simple tests with a tuning fork, or test your hearing in the surgery. Usually, they will refer you to the audiology clinic or ear, nose and throat (ENT) department of your local hospital to have hearing tests.

If you choose to, you can go to a private dispenser for a hearing test or to buy hearing aids. For more information, read our factsheet **Buying a hearing aid**.



What will happen at the clinic or hospital?

In the clinic, you will be seen by an audiologist and sometimes by an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor. Before they test your hearing, you will be asked some questions about your hearing and they will look in your ears.

You will then have a hearing test lasting about 20 minutes. The audiologist will ask you to put on headphones and listen to sounds of differing frequencies (pitch) and levels of loudness. One ear is tested and then the other. You have to press a button each time you hear a sound. The audiologist will make them gradually quieter to find out the softest sounds you can hear. If your hearing test shows that you have a hearing loss, you may have another test to give more information about your hearing problem.



For more information about the hearing test, read our leaflet **Getting a hearing aid**.

What happens next?

If the audiologist recommends that you need hearing aids, it is a good idea to try them. You may find that you get on better with two – one for each ear. It takes time to get used to using them because you have to become familiar with the sounds you hear and with operating the controls, so the sooner you start the better. You can get free hearing aids on the NHS. For more information, read our factsheets **Digital hearing aids** and **The NHS Hearing Aid Service**.

Why do people lose their hearing?

There are several possible causes of permanent hearing loss:

- **age-related hearing loss.** More than 50% of people over 60 have a hearing loss. This common condition is called presbycusis.
- **noise exposure.** Prolonged and repeated exposure to loud noise – at work or at leisure – can damage hearing.
- **diseases of the ear.** Infections of the middle ear or perforated eardrums can cause a hearing loss. So can serious infections like meningitis or measles.
- **genetics.** About one in every thousand babies is born moderately to profoundly deaf. Some people are genetically more prone to lose their hearing in later life.

If you want to know more about problems with hearing and how your ears work, read our leaflet **Ears and dizziness**.

Learning to manage your hearing loss.

Your hearing loss should never stop you from socialising or make you feel left out of conversations. There are many ways to help manage a hearing loss; a hearing aid is just of them. You may find that you need to get used to your hearing aid and learn some new skills such as lipreading. Remember that all this will take time.

There is also a range of equipment that you might find useful if you have a hearing loss, whether you use a hearing aid or not.

- You could try a telephone amplifier to use with your existing telephone or get a new telephone specially designed for hard of hearing people.
- You can get equipment to let you know when your telephone, doorbell or alarm clock is ringing or to draw your attention to your smoke detector or baby alarm.
- Listening equipment can help you hear the television, radio, stereo or conversation.
- You can get the most out of your television, video or DVD player by using subtitles.

For more information about all of this, read our leaflet **Everyday solutions**.

Want to know more?

Make sure you continue to get up-to-date information about deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus by joining RNID.

Our lively, bi-monthly, award-winning magazine, *One in Seven*, is packed full of useful information and advice, including product reviews, reader views and news and events.

How to join

Anyone can be a member, and it costs from £12.50 a year.

To join:

- visit www.rnid.org.uk/join or
- call **0845 634 0679** (tel/textphone) or
- fill in the coupon over the page.

You can save money by paying by direct debit.

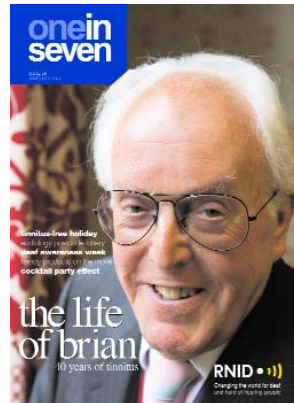
Contact us for more information:

Membership team
RNID
19-23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL

Tel/textphone **0845 634 0679**

membership@rnid.org.uk

www.rnid.org.uk/join



Yes, I want to join RNID

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss) _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Email _____

Telephone _____ Textphone _____

Please accept my membership payment: (tick relevant boxes)

£21 standard rate (or £17.50 if you pay by direct debit)

£14 If you are retired, unwaged or a full-time student
(or £12.50 if you pay by direct debit)

I would like to make a donation of £ _____

I enclose a cheque/PO made payable to RNID
(delete as appropriate)

I prefer to pay by credit card/debit card/CharityCard
(delete as appropriate)

Card number (Visa/Mastercard/Maestro/CharityCard)

Issue no

Signature _____ Expiry date ____/____

Please return this form to:
RNID, FREEPOST LON13186, London EC1B 1AL

Occasionally, we may want to let you know about the work we are doing.
If you would prefer not to be contacted in this way please tick this box.

Occasionally, we will allow other organisations to contact you, but if you
would prefer not to be contacted, please tick this box.

From time to time we would like to contact you by email. Please tick here if
you would like to receive emails from us.



Where can I get further information?

You might find some of our other factsheets or leaflets useful:

- Losing your hearing suddenly (factsheet)
- Living with someone who has a gradual hearing loss (factsheet)
- Everyday solutions (leaflet)
- Getting a hearing aid (leaflet)
- Deaf and hard of hearing people (leaflet)

Solutions

Our catalogue of products for deaf and hard of hearing people

Communication tips (card)

A double-sided card with tips for if you're deaf or hard of hearing, or if you're hearing and speaking to someone who is deaf

Fingerspelling alphabet (bookmark)

Fingerspelling alphabet (card)

Fingerspelling alphabet (poster)

Please contact the Information Line (see back page) for free copies of these. And let us know if you would like any of them – or this leaflet – in Braille, large print or audio format.

We're RNID, the charity working to change the world for the UK's 9 million deaf and hard of hearing people.

There are a number of ways
to support us. To find out more:

Go to

www.rnid.org.uk

Information line

Telephone 0808 808 0123

Textphone 0808 808 9000

SMS 0780 0000 360

(costs vary depending on your network)

Or write to us

informationline@rnid.org.uk

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