

# Supporting Someone with Hearing Loss



## Facts and Figures

- It is estimated that **466 million people** are living with **hearing loss** worldwide (WHO)
- In the **UK** it is estimated that **21,000 people** have **work-related hearing problems per year**
- An estimated **300,000 ex-armed forces personnel** have **noise-induced hearing loss**
- 52% of combat soldiers** have **moderately severe hearing loss** or worse

## How We Hear

The ear is made of three parts, the outer, middle and inner ear.

The outer ear is the visible part of the ear known as the pinna and the ear canal that extends to the eardrum.

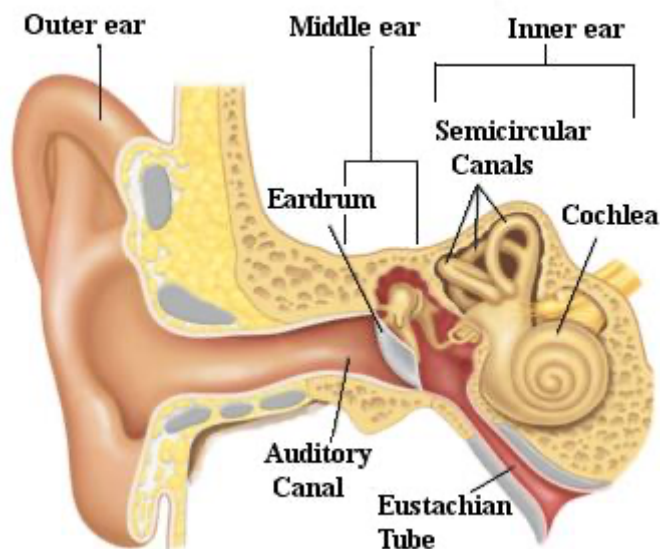
The middle ear is made up from the eardrum and three small bones that are held in the air-filled space. There are small ligaments and muscles within this space that help to reduce loud vibrations such as that of our own voice through the skull.

The inner ear contains the hearing and balance organs. The hearing organ is called the cochlea and has many specialised hair cells that convert the sound into electrical signals and send these onto the brain.

Sound travels through vibrations from the air through the outer, middle and inner ear to be perceived in the brain as sound and what we hear. Problems can occur in different parts of the pathway resulting in hearing loss and hearing difficulties.

### Did you know?

**The use of hearing aids has been shown to improve quality of life as well as the rate of cognitive decline.**



## Types of Hearing Loss

### Sensorineural

This is where the cells within the hearing organ, known as the cochlea, are damaged resulting in difficulty picking up some sounds. Most noise-induced types of hearing loss are sensorineural.

### Conductive

This is where the hearing nerve and organ are healthy however it is difficult for sound to reach this part of the hearing pathway due to problems in the outer or middle ear. Common causes for this are:

- Wax
- Eardrum perforation
- Ossicular Dislocation/Discontinuity (a condition where the bones in the middle ear are affected)
- Trauma

### Mixed

This type of hearing loss is a combination of both conductive and sensorineural hearing losses. In these cases there is some difficulty in the sounds transferring from the outer part of the ear to the cochlea as well as damage within the hearing organ.

## Treatment

Treatment for hearing loss can vary depending on the cause. In some cases surgical or medical intervention can improve symptoms. In other cases hearing aids or cochlear implants provide amplification to enable the listener to access sounds that cannot be heard well.

It can often be difficult to accept hearing loss, particularly if the deafness is permanent or has implications for an individuals' lifestyle or career. Equally accepting hearing aids or cochlear implantation can be a big step for some people due to the stigma that is still attached.

It is important to be mindful, respectful and patient with someone who is adjusting to hearing loss and be aware that they may need some time to consider treatment options that they are most comfortable with.

Accessing treatment is routinely available on the NHS and medical professional will be able to discuss treatment options through assessments and consultation.

Assessment will generally include taking a medical history and asking questions about your hearing, looking in the ear with an otoscope to check the health of the ear and hearing tests.

### *Did you know?*

**Hearing loss doesn't just affect the person who has it. The communication difficulties can cause frustration and stress on relationships with family and friends. Hearing loss can affect a person's quality of life in many ways and this can be heart-breaking to see.**

## How can I help?

**Talk** to your loved ones about their **hearing concerns**


Offer to **support** through their **hearing journey** including accessing professional treatment and advice

Be **patient**, hearing loss affects people differently and can **take time** to accept

Use **good communication** strategies



## Good Communication Tips

-  **Get the listener's attention before you speak to them**
-  **Speak clearly and at a natural pace, don't shout**
-  **Move closer and ensure your face is visible and well lit**
-  **Reduce background noise, move somewhere quieter or reduce room noise where possible**
-  **If talking in a group, speak one at a time**
-  **Rephrase rather than repeat and don't waffle**

## Support Services

-  Support groups
-  Charitable organisations
-  Counselling
-  Hearing Therapy
- 



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### Disclaimer

This information leaflet aims to provide an overview of noise and the ear however this is not a substitute for medical advice. Always consult your GP or medical professional.