

# Medical Fitness **NOTES**

Winter 2023



## Dealing with Hearing Loss

and how to support  
loved ones

### **MEDICAL FITNESS CENTER**

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**UPMC | HANOVER**



# Dealing With **Hearing Loss**

## What is hearing loss?

Hearing loss is a sudden or gradual decrease in how well you can hear. Gradual hearing loss happens over time. It can affect people of all ages. Hearing loss may be mild or severe. Depending on the cause, hearing loss may improve with treatment or be permanent.

## What causes it?

The most common causes of hearing loss are noise and aging. Exposure to everyday noises, such as using a power lawn mower, can lead to hearing loss over many years. As you get older, changes in the inner ear cause slow but steady hearing loss.

## What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of hearing loss include muffled hearing and a feeling that your ear is plugged. You may have trouble understanding what people are saying, especially when there is background noise. You may listen to the TV or radio at a higher volume than in the past.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will do a physical exam and ask about your symptoms and past health. He or she also may look in your ears with a lighted device. If your doctor thinks that you have hearing loss, you will have hearing tests to check whether you have hearing loss and how severe it is.

## How is hearing loss treated?

Treatment depends on the type and cause of hearing loss. Permanent hearing loss can be treated with hearing aids or devices that alert you to sounds around the house like the doorbell. If hearing aids do not work for you, cochlear implants may be an option.

## Self-Care

- Avoid loud noises whenever possible. This helps keep your hearing from getting worse.
- Always wear hearing protection around loud noises.
- Wear a hearing aid as directed.
- Have hearing tests as your doctor suggests. They can show whether your hearing has changed.
- Use other devices as needed. These may include:
  - > Telephone amplifiers and hearing aids that can connect to a television, stereo, radio, or microphone.
  - > Devices that use lights or vibrations. These alert you to the doorbell, a ringing telephone, or a baby monitor.
  - > Television closed-captioning.
  - > TTY (text telephone). This lets you type messages back and forth on the telephone instead of talking or listening. These devices are also called TDD. When messages are typed on the keyboard, they are sent over the phone line to a receiving TTY. The message is shown on a monitor.

- Use text messaging, social media, and email if it is hard for you to communicate by telephone.
- Try to learn a listening technique called speechreading. It is not lip-reading. You pay attention to people's gestures, expressions, posture, and tone of voice. These clues can help you understand what a person is saying. Face the person you are talking to, and have them face you. Make sure the lighting is good. You need to see the other person's face clearly.
- Think about counseling if you need help to adjust to your hearing loss.

## Giving Support

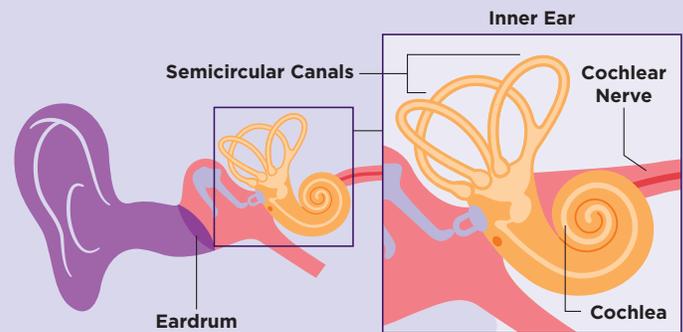
It is easy for a person with hearing loss to feel cut off from conversations and social interactions. However, you can take steps to help keep this from happening.

- Make sure the person knows that you are speaking to them.
- It can help to use the person's name.
- Speak to the person at a distance of 3 ft. to 6 ft.
- Make sure that the person can see your face, mouth, and gestures. Arrange furniture and lighting so that everyone in the conversation is visible.
- Do not speak directly into the person's ear.
- Speak slightly louder than normal.
- It is best to speak slowly and clearly.
- Do not repeat the same word over and over again.
- If a certain word or phrase is not understood, find another way to say it.
- Tell the person when the topic of conversation changes.
- Cut down on background noise.
  - > Turn off the TV or radio during conversations.
  - > Ask for quiet sections in restaurants.
  - > Try to sit away from the door at theaters.
- Include the person in group conversations. Do not talk about the person as though the person is not there.

## Ear or hearing issues? Specialty Care ENT-UPMC can help.

Specialty Care ENT-UPMC treats a variety of diseases and conditions, including dizziness and vertigo, hearing loss, and ear pain with offices in Hanover and Gettysburg. To reach Specialty Care ENT-UPMC, call **717-633-9229** (Hanover) or **717-344-8171** (Gettysburg).

# Anatomy Corner



The inner ear includes the cochlea, the cochlear nerve, and the **semicircular canals**. The **cochlea** is the main sensory organ of hearing. Sound vibrations from the **eardrum** in the middle ear make the fluid in the inner ear move. The fluid then bends tiny hair cells in the **cochlea**. When the hair cells move, impulses travel along the **cochlear nerve** to the brain. These nerve impulses turn into sound in your brain.

The semicircular canals help you keep your balance. They have special cells that detect motion and changes in position. When you move a certain way, such as when you stand up or turn your head, the special cells sense the movement. This helps your brain know what position your body is in.



## Traveling this winter?

We can reach out to other medical fitness centers around the country. For example, if you travel more than 50 miles away from the UPMC Hanover Medical Fitness Center and will be close to another medical fitness center, we can contact that facility if you are interested in exercising while traveling. Each participating facility determines their own terms for incoming guests. Most facilities offer a complimentary first visit/week or a \$5-\$10 fee per visit for Medical Fitness Association members. To find out where other medical fitness centers are located around the country, go to [medicalfitness.org](http://medicalfitness.org). **If you will be traveling and are interested in this program, please talk to our facility coordinator, Brady Slater.**

# Seasonal Affective Disorder



## What is seasonal affective disorder (SAD)?

Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a type of depression that occurs during the same season each year. It is sometimes called winter depression or seasonal depression.

**Anyone can get SAD, but it is more common in:**

- Women
- People who live far from the equator, where winter daylight hours are very short.
- Adults.
- People who have other mood disorders, such as depression.

## What causes it?

- Experts are not sure what causes SAD. However, they think it may be caused by a lack of sunlight. Lack of light may upset your “biological clock,” which controls your sleep-wake pattern and other circadian rhythms. Lack of light may also cause problems with serotonin, a brain chemical that affects mood.
- SAD can come and go at about the same time each year. You may feel unhappy and tired during fall and winter but feel more cheerful and have more energy in spring and summer.

## What are the symptoms?

If you have SAD, you may feel sad, grumpy, or anxious. You may lose interest in your usual activities, or you may gain weight. You may eat more and crave carbohydrates, such as bread and pasta. You may also have trouble concentrating and may sleep more but still feel tired.

## How is it diagnosed?

**To diagnose SAD, your doctor will ask if:**

- You have been depressed during the same season and have gotten better when the seasons changed for at least 2 years in a row.
- You have symptoms that often occur with SAD, such as being very hungry, gaining weight, and sleeping more than usual.
- You have other mood disorders, such as depression.
- Your doctor may also do a mental health assessment to get a better idea of how you feel and how well you are able to think, reason, and remember. It can sometimes be hard to tell the difference between SAD and other types of depression.

## Caring for yourself

There are things you can do for yourself when you have seasonal affective disorder.

Regular exercise and getting more sunlight can help. So try to exercise outdoors when the sun is shining. Being active during the daytime, especially early in the day, may help you have more energy and feel less depressed. Any activities that raise your heart rate—including daily chores—can help, especially if you can do them outdoors or near a sunny window.

*Are you or a loved one struggling with Seasonal Affective Disorder or other mental health concerns? PinnacleHealth Psychological Associates works with individuals and families, and has expertise in treating children, adolescents, and adults.*

**Visit [UPMC.com/CentralPa](https://www.upmc.com/CentralPa) for more information on behavioral health resources, including in person and virtual visits.**

## MEDICAL FITNESS CENTER

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This information is provided to you as a guide only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you have questions about your health, physical fitness, or medical condition, you should seek the advice of your physician or health care provider.

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