



have you heard?

## Amplifon Hearing Health Care Newsletter

### Amazing Beethoven

Created heartfelt music despite, and because of, deafness

It's well known that the great German composer Ludwig van Beethoven was afflicted with a significant hearing loss. By age 44 he was almost totally deaf. The good news for lovers of classical tunes: Beethoven didn't allow deafness to stop him from composing music during the last 10 years of his life.

One of Beethoven's coping mechanisms, according to an article in TIME magazine, was to clench a stick in his teeth and hold it against the keyboard of his piano. This allowed him to faintly discern the musical notes he was composing. He also accumulated a large collection of "hearing aids," including a special ear horn —

#### Did you know...

##### Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss (SSHL) Fast facts

- ◆ Affects 1 in 5,000 people every year
- ◆ About 15% have identifiable causes such as:
  - infection disease
  - head trauma
  - autoimmune diseases
  - blood circulation issues
  - neurological/inner ear disorders
  - ototoxic drugs
  - tumors

##### And the good news...

- ◆ About half will recover some or all of their hearing within 2 weeks of onset
- ◆ Of those who receive medical treatment, 85% will recover some of their hearing

#### In this issue...

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Beethoven's deafness probably caused him to be highly attuned to the rhythm of his own heartbeat. Medical researchers have analyzed the rhythms of his later compositions — leading them to suspect that his heartbeat was irregular, resulting from cardiac arrhythmia.

"His music may have been both figuratively and physically heartfelt," says Joel Howell, MD, PhD, a professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan Medical School. "When your heart beats irregularly from heart disease, it does so in some predictable patterns. We think we hear some of those same patterns in his music."

#### Stay fit, reduce risk!

Women with a BMI of 40 or above have a 25% higher relative risk of hearing loss, compared with those who have a BMI of under 25, according to researchers. In addition, a waist circumference of 35 or more inches brings a 27% higher relative risk of hearing loss in women, compared to a waist size of 28 inches or less.

Finally, the research showed a strong correlation between physical activity (e.g., two hours of walking per week) and a reduced risk of hearing loss. At HearPO, we encourage you to protect your hearing. Staying physically fit may be one more way to do it!



\*BMI, calculated from an individual's weight and height, provides a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people; a BMI of 30 or above is considered obese.

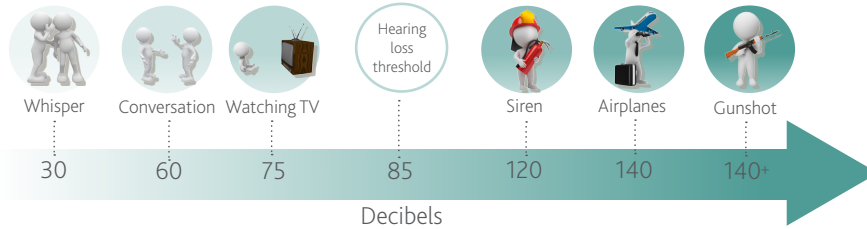
# Prevention Tips

## Seven ways to preserve your hearing



### Wear hearing protection in noisy situations.

Concerts, sporting events and lawn mowers... these are just a few of the reasons why 15% of Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 have noise-induced hearing loss. Rule of thumb: If you're exposed to 85 or more decibels, wear earplugs or other hearing protection products. Hearing loss begins to occur at decibels of 85 and above.



### Turn down the volume.

An MP3 player at maximum volume delivers around 105 decibels. Set the volume at no more than 50%, and take frequent breaks from the ear buds or headphones.



### Keep cotton swabs out of the ear.

Swabs can actually push earwax deeper into the ear canal, muffling your hearing and possibly requiring medical attention if the wax becomes impacted.



### Maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

Researchers have found that hearing loss is twice as common in Americans with diabetes as it is in those who don't have disease. For people with pre-diabetes, the incidence of hearing loss is 30% higher.



### Lower your blood pressure.

High blood pressure may put your hearing at risk by interfering with blood flow to the ears, according to WebMD.



### Watch your weight.

The Harvard Nurses' Health Study followed more than 68,000 women and found that those with a higher body mass index (BMI) or larger waist measurement were at an increased risk for hearing issues than those at a normal weight.



### Be aware of ototoxic drugs.

Researchers know of more than 200 "ototoxic" drugs, both prescription and over the counter, that can cause temporary or permanent hearing loss in some individuals. Ask your physician about a drug's impact on your hearing and whether you can switch to a non-ototoxic alternative.

Finally, if you suspect hearing loss, don't wait to get help. Although hearing aids cannot prevent further hearing loss or restore natural hearing, early intervention may help you avoid social isolation, depression and other conditions that may be tied to a hearing impairment. Call Amplifon Hearing Health Care today to find a provider near you and to schedule a hearing test.

## EXPERIENCING DEPRESSION?

it might be related to your hearing.

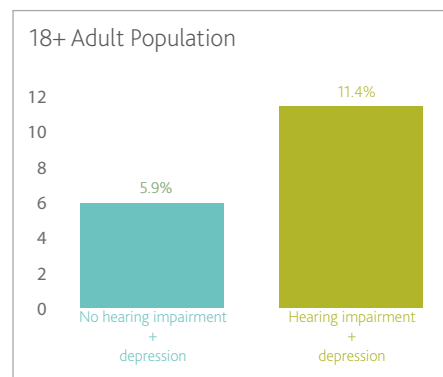
If you're experiencing depression, you should seek treatment from a mental health professional. You may also want to get your hearing checked.

In a nationwide study, 11.4% of hearing-impaired adults age 18 or older suffered from moderate to severe depression, compared to 5.9% of those who had no hearing loss. The research was conducted by the National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD).

Especially vulnerable to hearing loss-related depression were women and individuals younger than age 70, according to the NIDCD study.

One person who's not surprised by these findings is James Firman, president and CEO of the National Council on Aging. "People with hearing loss, especially those who don't use hearing aids, find it more difficult to communicate with other people, whether in family situations, social gatherings or at work," he states.

Treating a hearing loss may be one component of managing depression. If you're concerned about a possible problem with your hearing, call Amplifon Hearing Health Care today to find a provider near you and to schedule a hearing test.



## Like to eat fish?

Here's a reason to enjoy it even more...

For years, nutritional and medical experts have proclaimed the health benefits of eating fish, from boosting brain function to preventing heart attacks and stroke. Now you can add good hearing as a possible advantage of consuming fish.

Specifically, women who ate two or more servings of fish per week — and apparently it didn't matter what kind of fish — had a reduced risk of hearing loss, according to the Nurses' Health Study II conducted by Brigham and Women's Hospital at Harvard Medical School.

The study's lead author, Dr. Sharon Curhan, suspects that a higher consumption of fish and long-chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) stimulates blood flow in the cochlea portion of the inner ear. Scientists have already established that PUFA intake can help decrease the risk of heart disease. Similarly, PUFA may help preserve hearing by maintaining blood flow in the cochlea.

With so many types of fish available today, along with so many ways to prepare it, isn't it amazing to think that this delicious food could be providing a boost to your hearing?

## Hearing loss may increase risk of death in older adults, according to research

Older hearing-impaired adults may face a higher risk of dying than normal-hearing people in the same age group. This is the primary finding of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine researchers, who examined data on 1,666 individuals age 70 and above.

After adjusting for demographic characteristics and common health risk factors, the results suggest that moderate or more severe hearing loss was associated with a 39% increased risk of mortality, compared to individuals with normal hearing. A mild hearing loss came with a 21% higher risk of mortality.

Researchers are trying to better understand the reasons behind this connection. One theory: Older people with a hearing loss tend to have more difficulty communicating with others, including healthcare professionals. In addition, they are prone to be more socially isolated and less able to care for their own long-term health conditions.

It's not yet known whether treating a hearing loss reduces the risk of death. However, Piers Dawes, hearing loss researcher at the University of Manchester, sees the value of intervention — and the sooner the better. Timely treatment, which may include hearing aids, he says, "could promote social engagement, increased physical activity and better communication with doctors and other health professionals."



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