



## SENIOR HEALTH

# Hearing Problems

WHY THEY OCCUR AND WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT THEM

### SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS

*ringing in the ears*

*talking loudly*

*turning up the volume on  
the television and radio*

*complaining that people  
are mumbling*

*confusing words that have  
similar sounds*

*watching a speaker's face intently*

### CAUSES OF HEARING LOSS

- heredity
- circulatory disorders
- changes in the ear's structure
- exposure to excessive noise
- ear infections
- a burst eardrum
- bony growths in the middle ear
- reactions to some medications

### TINNITUS

This common condition is best described as a ringing sound in the ears. The sound can also resemble hissing, buzzing or roaring. Mild cases are often caused by a buildup of wax next to the eardrum. When the wax is removed, your hearing is restored. More severe cases need to be brought to the attention of a specialist.

### DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF HEARING LOSS

If you think you're experiencing hearing loss, you should see an audiologist and an ear, nose and throat specialist (ENT). An audiologist can determine the extent of the hearing loss and an ENT will diagnose the medical problem and recommend treatment.

The more you know about your hearing loss, the easier it will be to find the right treatment for you. When purchasing a hearing aid, get one with a volume control, a 30-day trial period and a one-year warranty on repairs. A distortion of sound is normal until you adjust to the device. A whistling sound is often a warning sign of an improper fit.

### COPING SKILLS

Auditory training can help a hearing impaired person learn to listen in new ways. Speech or lip reading involves watching for visual cues and watching people's lips form words.

Simple strategies can be put into practice at any time, such as:

- standing or sitting close to the person who's speaking to you.
- asking the speaker to rephrase what you don't understand.
- telling people what they can do when talking to help you understand (such as speaking more slowly or standing in the light so you can see their faces).