

Hearing Self-Management Plan

- Avoid loud noises or use earplugs
- Do not use cotton swabs in your ears
- Take medications only as directed
- Avoid smoking, limit alcohol intake
- Manage stress
- If using hearing aid(s)-properly clean and store
- Eat a healthy diet
- Keep your blood pressure under control
- If diabetic, keep blood sugar under control

Green Flags – All Clear

What this means ...



If:

- Follow the helpful tips above.

- You are taking steps towards slowing hearing change. Great!

Yellow Flags – Caution

What this means



If:

- You notice hearing loss; regularly need to have information repeated, need louder volume on TV or radio.
- Avoid social settings or self-isolate
- Avoid talking on the phone, or ask someone to talk for you
- Conversations are muffled, mumbled, and not clear
- Feel tired after social engagements
- Have pain in in one or both ears and/or new onset of persistent ringing(tinnitus)
- New onset of loss of hearing

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team

You could be experiencing normal age-related hearing changes, or you might have an ear infection or other medical condition.

Contact your primary health care provider: _____

If you have not had a hearing test by age 60, talk with your health care provider.

Red Flags – Stop and Think

What this means ...



If:

- Sudden onset hearing loss **OR**
- Ear drainage and/or ear bleeding with pain

If you notice a Red Flag, contact health care provider immediately!

You could have sudden sensorineural hearing loss or ear infection. Contact a health care professional immediately. Your primary health care provider:

Hearing Fast Facts

- Our ears play a role in our overall health and safety. These amazing organs made up of three parts:
 - The outer ear collects sound and directs it to the eardrum. The ear canal also amplifies sound and protects the inner structures from foreign objects.
 - The middle ear includes the eardrum, the three smallest bones in the body (hammer, anvil, and stirrup), and the Eustachian tube which regulates middle ear air pressure. Sinus conditions can affect hearing by clogging the Eustachian tube and temporarily reducing the amplification normally provided by the middle ear
 - The inner ear includes the hearing organ (cochlea), the balance organs (labyrinth) and the auditory nerve. This is where sound and head movements are detected and converted to nerve impulses for your brain to interpret.
- **Hearing changes as we age.** In fact, one in 3 adults over age 65 has hearing loss. Because of the gradual change in hearing, you might not be aware of the change. **If you have hearing loss, know that you are not alone,** as about 40 million U.S adults aged 20-69 years have noise-induced hearing loss.
- **Hearing loss is the third most common reported chronic disease in older adults.** Events throughout one's lifetime, including loud noises, trauma, infectious diseases, head injuries, and even cancers can cause hearing loss.
- Some medications are linked to hearing loss. The severity of the hearing loss varies, depending upon the drug, dosage, and how long you take the medicine. In general, the impact on hearing increases as the drug accumulates in your body. This could be temporary or permanent. Medications like aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, certain antibiotics, certain cancer pills, water pills (diuretics), and quinine-based medications can impact hearing.
- Recent studies suggest that age-related hearing loss is associated with the decline in cognitive abilities. People with hearing loss develop cognitive decline earlier than people with normal hearing.

So, what can you do?

- Be proactive and get a baseline hearing evaluation at age 60. Regardless of your age, if you notice changes in your hearing, talk with your health care provider.
- **Be a self-advocate!** Share hearing change with family, friends, and others and let them know how best to communicate with you. Ask them not to raise their voice but to speak extra clearly, and to repeat or rephrase if necessary.
- Let them know when their speech is clear to you so they can know what works and will feel encouraged.
- Repeat back to people what you think you heard them say.
- Establish eye contact and get the attention of the person during conversations.
- Check out captioned telephone: www.oeius.org
- For resources and information: Speech, Hearing and Deaf Center (HSDC) www.hsdc.orghttps://hsdc.org/clinic/audiology-services/audiology-resources/
- Hearing Loss Association of America in Washington State: <https://hearingloss-wa.org>

Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County— plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle & King County.

For more information, call 1-844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org



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