

## How Do I Know If I Have Hearing Loss?

Hearing loss can be rather sneaky. Because it usually happens gradually, you can have hearing loss and not even realize it. Others may be the first to notice when they realize they need to speak louder, repeat themselves more often or tolerate uncomfortable volumes from the TV or radio. The tricky part about hearing loss is that all sounds are not created equal. Most people with hearing loss hear differently at different pitches. Typically, hearing loss is greater in the high pitches. Since speech sounds occur at different pitches and at different degrees of loudness, this leads to people being able to *hear* but not *understand*. For example, the /s/ sound is a soft, high frequency sound but the 'o' sound is a low frequency sound with more impact. With some hearing losses, you'll hear the /o/ sound loud and clear but may miss the /s/ sound. You can just imagine the distortion this would create.

### SIGNS OF A HEARING LOSS TYPICALLY INCLUDE:

- You frequently complain that people mumble or that speech is not clear or you hear only parts of conversations when people are talking.
- You often ask people to repeat what they said.
- Your friends or relatives tell you that you don't seem to hear very well.
- You do not laugh at jokes because you miss too much of the story.
- You need to ask others about the details of a meeting that you just attended.
- Others say that you play the TV or radio too loudly.
- You cannot hear the doorbell or the telephone.
- You find that looking at people when they talk to you makes it somewhat easier to understand, especially when you're in a noisy place or situations with competing conversations.
- For young children, signs of hearing loss are often difficult to detect. If you suspect that your child is not responding well to sound, language development is delayed, or his or her speech is unclear, seek the services of an audiologist. Children's hearing can be tested even as a newborn or infant.

If any of these symptoms occur more than occasionally, you should consult an audiologist, the hearing care professional who can evaluate your hearing and recommend an appropriate course of action.



