



# The impact of hearing loss on mental health



# Hearing loss can have a negative impact on your emotions. Some of the effects of hearing loss can include:

- **Anger and denial:** Losing your hearing can result in drastic changes to your everyday life that can be difficult to get used to, it may cause feelings of anger. It is also common for people with hearing loss to be in denial about the severity of their hearing loss because it is a change that is hard to accept.
- **Depression and anxiety:** Losing your hearing can make you feel like you lost part of your identity and can cause feelings of sadness and depression. Symptoms of depression can include crying, slowed responses, weight changes, and disrupted sleeping patterns. Hearing loss can also be anxiety-provoking, especially when you are faced with having a conversation with another person. It can create a lot of stress and worry that you are going to miss parts of the conversation and let on that you are struggling to hear. You might worry about how quickly your hearing loss will worsen or whether current treatments can salvage your hearing.
- **Isolation and social withdrawal:** It is common for a person with a hearing loss to avoid situations where it is difficult to hear in order to avoid feelings of stress, anxiety, and embarrassment about his/her hearing loss. Isolation and social withdrawal can also lead to feelings of depression or make them worse. The frustration of not being able to hear in social situations may lead to avoidance of social situations, like going out in public or meeting up with family and friends, which can sadly lead to further social isolation.
- **Fatigue:** Losing your hearing can make you feel tired or fatigued because straining to hear properly demands more of your energy. "People with hearing loss often feel physically exhausted at the end of the day from the strain of trying to hear and make sense of what people are saying because of all the additional work that is involved in hearing and trying to fill in the gaps to stay a part of the conversation.
- **Cognitive decline and dementia:** Hearing loss can speed up cognitive decline in older adults, raising the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Several theories may explain the link between hearing loss and cognitive decline:
  - The brain is working harder to interpret the world without sounds, which reduces its ability to perform other tasks.
  - Loss of hearing may discourage you from being social. This isolation then speeds up cognitive decline.
  - Parts of your brain may shrink as they receive and interpret fewer signals.
- **Psychosis:** Hearing loss can be a risk factor for psychosis, a condition that can include symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions. Auditory hallucinations, such as hearing voices and music, can be particularly common in people with impaired hearing. This may be due to feelings of loneliness or disruptions to the way the brain recalls and perceives information.
- **Sleep problems:** Impaired hearing can affect the quality of your sleep due to the presence of tinnitus. This, in turn, puts you at risk of other conditions, ranging from depression to high blood pressure to diabetes.

Hearing loss can be managed and treated.

