

# Diabetes & Hearing Loss–Silent Partners

Diabetes and hearing loss are two of Canada's most widespread health concerns, with hearing loss left largely unrecognized and undertreated.<sup>1</sup> Over 3 million people in Canada have diabetes,<sup>2</sup> and an estimated 4.6 million Canadians aged 20 to 79 years have some degree of hearing loss.<sup>3</sup>

Given the invisible nature of both, is there a link between the two?

## Facts & Stats

- Hearing loss is twice as common in people with diabetes compared to those who do not have diabetes.<sup>4</sup>
- Of the 79 million Americans thought to have pre-diabetes, the rate of hearing loss is 30% higher than in those who have normal blood sugar.<sup>5</sup>
- Hearing depends on small blood vessels and nerves in the inner ear. Researchers believe that over time, high blood glucose levels can damage these vessels and nerves, diminishing the ability to hear.<sup>6</sup>
- Diabetes appears to affect hearing and brainstem function, making some more susceptible to falls.<sup>7</sup>
- Hearing tests are frequently overlooked in routine diabetes care.<sup>8</sup>

## What You Can Do To Help

Research shows that people with diabetes are twice as likely to have hearing loss. The data also suggests that persons with diabetes may experience hearing loss at an earlier age, and would benefit from having their hearing screened. On the basis of the research, physicians should include routine hearing assessments, alongside vision tests, in the annual test battery for diabetic patients. The earlier a hearing loss is diagnosed, the earlier it can be treated. A hearing test is a low-cost, low-risk test that can lead to intervention and improve a patient's communication, their safety, and overall quality of life.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, if hearing aids are recommended, encourage regular use. People with hearing loss are five times more likely to continue with a hearing solution if they are given a positive recommendation by their Physician.<sup>10</sup>

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# References

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