

FAQs About Conditions of the Ear and Hearing Loss

How do we hear?

The ear is divided into three parts:

1. The *outer ear* includes the pinna and the ear canal, which collect sound waves and channel them through the ear canal to the eardrum.
2. The *middle ear* transfers the sound wave from the eardrum, across three small bones called ossicles. The last ossicle is attached to the sense organ of hearing, in the inner ear, called the cochlea.
3. The *inner ear* contains the cochlea, the organs of balance, and the auditory nerve. The auditory nerve takes the sound signal to the brain where it is interpreted.

What is tinnitus?

Tinnitus is the perception of sound in the ears or head when no external source is present. Some call it "ringing in the ears" or "head noise." The exact cause or causes of tinnitus are not known, although it is common with people experiencing hearing loss. It is important that anyone experiencing tinnitus have a complete hearing evaluation by an Audiologist and a medical evaluation by an Otolaryngologist.

What is noise exposure?

When noise is too loud, it begins to kill the nerve endings in the inner ear. The more our ears are exposed to loud sounds, the more the nerve endings are destroyed, decreasing your hearing. Having noise exposure in your past will affect your hearing as you age.

How can I tell if a noise is dangerous?

Noise may be damaging if you have to shout over background noise to be heard, the noise hurts your ears, your ears ring during or after exposure to the noise, or you have difficulty hearing for several hours after the noise exposure.

How loud is too loud?

Experts agree that prolonged exposure to noise over 85dB, which can be produced by things such as loud traffic or power tools, is dangerous. Noise levels above 140dB, which is approximately the level of noise emitted from things such as a gun muzzle blast or jet engine, can cause damage to hearing after just one exposure.

What can I do about noise exposure?

People often forget to protect their hearing until it is too late. The damage from noise exposure is permanent. The key is preventing noise exposure by avoiding loud noise or using appropriate hearing protection devices.

What type of hearing protection is best for me?

*Custom Noise Plugs – for sleeping, work, concerts, hobbies

*Musician Plugs – for concerts, bands, musicians

*Shooters Molds – for hunters, or those exposed to sounds from firearms

What products does Mile High Hearing & Balance offer for both noise protection and hearing loss?

*For Noise Protection: Custom Noise Plugs, Hunter/Shooter Plugs, Pilot Molds, Musician Plugs, Custom Swim Plugs, Stethoscope Molds, Custom Fit Ear Molds for cellular telephones, Custom Radio Headphones for race car driving, as well as many others.

*For Hearing Loss: Different types of hearing aids from the top five hearing aid manufacturers, fit based on degree of hearing loss, lifestyle, and budget.

What are the most common symptoms of hearing loss?

*You feel people mumble.

*You need others to repeat themselves often.

*You need to turn up the television even though others say it is too loud.

*You sometimes misunderstand statements or questions, and answer incorrectly.

*You nod in agreement, even when you are unsure of what was spoken.

*You find it difficult to follow group conversations.

*Background noise makes it difficult for you to follow the conversation.

How is hearing loss diagnosed?

In order to understand what is happening with one's hearing, a complete evaluation should be performed by an Audiologist. The test will provide information as to the type and degree of the hearing impairment. If any medical concerns are discovered in this process, a medical consultation with our Otolaryngologists will be scheduled.

What type of hearing loss do I have?

There are three types of hearing loss:

1. Conductive hearing loss occurs when there is a problem with how sound transfers through the outer or middle ear. Common causes include middle ear infections and a buildup of ear wax. Many conductive hearing losses can be medically corrected.
2. Sensorineural hearing loss is caused by damage to the inner ear system. This type of hearing loss involves the reduction of overall volume of sound and often reduces the ability to understand speech clearly. Common causes include exposure to loud noise and loss associated with aging. Generally this type of hearing loss cannot be medically corrected.
3. Mixed hearing loss occurs when a person has both a conductive and a sensorineural hearing loss simultaneously.

How bad is my hearing loss?

Hearing loss is categorized by degree of hearing loss. Mild, moderate, severe, and profound are the different degree categories. Mild hearing loss generally refers to having difficulty in more challenging listening situations, such as noisy environments, while profound hearing loss generally describes the inability to hear in average listening situations, such as conversational speech.

How will my hearing instrument be selected?

Our Audiologists will help you evaluate your hearing instrument requirements, based upon your type and degree of hearing loss, as well as your lifestyle needs. Hearing products are highly customized and individualized. It is important to understand that in fitting a patient with an appropriate hearing instrument, the instrument is not just for a pair of ears but for a human being.

As such, each individual is unique and it takes professional experience and expertise to fit hearing instruments with competence.

At Mile High Hearing & Balance, we have chosen five top hearing instrument manufacturers for their product features, state of the art performance, and customer service. This allows us to provide our patients with a wide range of products to match individual needs.

For a more detailed look at two of our manufacturers:
Phonak Hearing Instruments (link to www.phonak.com)
Sonic Innovations Hearing Instruments (link to www.sonici.com)

What happens when I decide to purchase hearing aids?

First of all, it is important to understand that purchasing hearing aids is not a one time event. You are establishing a long term relationship with an Audiologist to continue the professional service you will need to maintain your hearing aids.

Digital hearing aid technology can range from entry level products to premium technology. A person's lifestyle, hearing loss, and budget dictate what type of technology will be appropriate. There are many styles of hearing aids available to match one's hearing and cosmetic needs.

Hearing aids will not bring you instant gratification. It takes the brain time to acclimatize to the new sounds it is hearing. A positive attitude, patience, and commitment can be your best tools to complete the transition to hearing aid use. If after taking some time to adjust you are not satisfied, you do have the option to return the instruments. All hearing aids are purchased on a 60 day trial basis with a return option.

For more information on hearing loss: www.audiology.org

For more information on noise exposure: www.dangerousdecibels.org/hearingloss.cfm

For noise exposure information for musicians: www.hearnet.com

**If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call our Audiologists.
It is our goal to educate our patients.
(303) 487-0834**