



Winter 2016

## Five Reasons to Take Your Hearing Health Seriously in 2016

By Lisa Packer  
(from [healthyhearing.com](http://healthyhearing.com))

When is hearing loss not just about hearing? Hearing loss is connected to your overall health and well-being in ways you might not realize. These top five health risks associated with hearing loss are important reasons to take your hearing health seriously in 2016:

**1. Mental health:** A person who can't hear well might stop socializing with friends or participating in hobbies or activities that they used to enjoy. That social isolation can then lead to feelings of loneliness and depression. But loneliness and depression aren't the only psychological or emotional issues to result from hearing loss. Irritability and anger are common, resulting from the inability to hear what others are saying. Fatigue is common as well; it can be exhausting trying to keep up with conversation if you can't hear a good portion of what is being said. The bottom line is that emotional and psychological issues associated with untreated hearing loss can lead to compromised emotional health.

**2. Heart conditions:** The vestibular system and the cardiovascular system are linked. As such, hearing loss has been linked to an increased risk of conditions such as heart disease. A healthy cardiovascular system means that there is adequate blood flow to the blood vessels of the inner ears; conversely, a poorly functioning cardiovascular system reduces blood flow to the inner ear, causing trauma to the blood vessels and leading to hearing loss. Also, hearing loss causes stress. Stress increases heart rate, damages blood vessels and raises blood pressure, all of which increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

**3. Cognitive decline:** A recent study out of the University of Colorado looked at the link between hearing loss and cognitive decline, specifically dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The researchers found in individuals with hearing loss, the brain's ability to process sound is significantly compromised. Hearing loss must be taken seriously, especially when it comes to dementia, because the brain begins to re-organize itself from the earliest stages of hearing loss. Knowing this, the solution could be as simple as early hearing loss screening programs for adults. And early intervention with hearing aids could prevent long term cognitive issues down the road.

**4. Personal safety:** It is difficult enough to hear approaching cars, the beeps of a truck in reverse or the shouts of pedestrians and cyclists among the sounds of urban life. Add in hearing loss and you are engaging in risk every time you leave the house. It is vital to be able to hear what is going on around you when you are on the streets, whether as a driver, cyclist or pedestrian. Diminished hearing loss causes danger not only for you, but for those around you.

**5. Maintaining balance:** Falls are the leading cause of death among the elderly, especially for those over the age of 65. Now, a recent study out of Johns Hopkins has determined that that even a mild hearing loss triples the risk of an accidental fall among the elderly. The hearing system is necessary to deliver the cues needed to walk safely.

Take action now! So why wait 7 to 10 years? Make 2016 the year to take care of your hearing and your health. Schedule an appointment with Lisa and get treatment for your hearing loss. Your body and your mind will thank you for it.

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**Lisa C. Alber, Au.D.**  
**Audiologist**

I have been an audiologist for over 20 years, and hearing aids have changed by leaps and bounds since I first started seeing patients. They have become smaller and smaller but also smarter and smarter. The latest hearing aid technology has enabled my patients to fall in love with their hearing aids more than ever and enjoy the world around them. And my most successful patients are the ones that understand the critical importance of routine use. Today's hearing aids are made to be worn all day long. Over time the brain starts "re-learning" how to hear again. This "re-learning" helps the brain to avoid auditory deprivation which leads to a much more rewarding life of hearing. So if you do have hearing aids, I can't overstate how important it is to wear them – every day! If you think you might need hearing aids or could use an upgrade from your current aids and would like to hear the latest technology in action, don't hesitate to call our office at and make an appointment. Or if you just want your hearing aids cleaned or checked out, stop by anytime between 8:30am and 4pm, Tuesday through Friday, and we'd be happy to make sure everything is working at its best.