

Hearing impairment tied to poorer physical function

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Hearing impairment is associated with significantly poorer physical

function and faster declines in physical function among older people over time compared with those with normal hearing, according to a study published online June 25 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Pablo Martinez-Amezcu, M.D., Ph.D., from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, and colleagues used data from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities study (2011 to 2019) to identify 2,956 community-dwelling [older adults](#) (mean age, 79 years) who attended study visit 6 between 2016 and 2017.

The researchers found that one-third of participants had normal hearing, 40 percent had mild hearing impairment, 23 percent had moderate hearing impairment, and 4 percent had severe hearing impairment. Hearing impairment was associated with higher odds of low physical performance scores (severe impairment versus normal hearing: odds ratio [OR] for composite physical performance, 2.51; OR for balance, 2.58; OR for gait speed, 2.11) in adjusted models. Over a maximum of 8.9 years of follow-up, participants with [hearing](#) impairment had faster declines in short physical performance battery versus participants with [normal hearing](#).

"This study's findings suggest that because [hearing impairment](#) is a prevalent but treatable condition, it may be a target for interventions to slow the decline of physical function associated with aging," the authors write.

One author disclosed financial ties to the biotechnology industry.

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