

Video: How untreated hearing loss can result in a negative health spiral

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Hearing loss is often thought of as a normal part of aging, but recent

studies have shown untreated hearing loss can significantly affect overall health. In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Nicholas Deep, a Mayo Clinic otolaryngologist, explains how untreated hearing loss can affect cognitive, social and physical health.

"We used to think of hearing loss as separate from our overall health, as something that is just a normal part of aging. Everyone gets it. It's not a big deal. But we're learning more that, actually, untreated hearing loss can result in a negative spiral of other health issues," says Dr. Deep.

With greater hearing loss, the brain has to work overtime to interpret the garbled message. That uses up brain power. There's less [cognitive reserve](#) for thinking, memory or other higher level brain functions.

Dr. Deep says patients get frustrated by their inability to communicate. They may withdraw socially, become less active and less connected with their friends and family. This can lead to loneliness, [social isolation](#) and depression. These are all independent risk factors for [cognitive decline](#).

Social isolation fueled by untreated hearing loss can affect not only a person's mind but also their body.

"They stay at home more. Their physical activities are starting to go down. As a result, their balance is declining. They're at increased risk for falls, which is a huge issue in the elderly. It's not surprising then, that untreated hearing loss has been a risk factor for increasing risk for falls, hospitalization, diabetes, [cardiovascular disease](#) and even mortality," says Dr. Deep.

Treating hearing loss with different solutions—such as hearing aids or [cochlear implants](#)—can reduce all these risks and improve quality of life.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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