

HEALTH & WELLNESS

IT'S TIME TO HEAR WHAT YOUR HEARING

Hearing loss is much more prevalent among the elderly than previously thought. In the nationally representative sample of older Medicare participants age 71 or above, almost two-thirds (65.3%)-corresponding to an estimated 21.5 million individuals-had some degree of hearing loss. By age 80, 84% had hearing issues. By age 90, nearly all (96.2%) had hearing loss. However, only 29.2% of those with hearing loss used hearing aids. Why so few? Primarily because of cost.

Medicare doesn't cover Hearing Aids and they should. It's time for congress to enact legislation to provide Medicare coverage for hearing loss. New legislation and regulations allow selling hearing aids without a prescription, called OTC hearing aids, for mild to moderate hearing loss, at much lower cost.

Hearing loss can hurt your quality of life. A large study by the National Council on Aging connected hearing loss to isolation, stress, anger, depression, loneliness, memory loss, dementia, cognitive decline, and many other problems. Another very recent study cited earlier death due to untreated hearing loss.

Veterans can get free hearing aids through the Veterans Administration (609-518-2273) Low-Income-qualified residents of New Jersey can get free refurbished hearing aids or \$1000 toward the purchase of a pair of new hearing aids. Contact the New Jersey department of deaf and hearing (DDHH) at 1-800-792-8339 or 609-588-2648.

If you have a hearing loss, do something about it. Many of us have mild hearing loss in our 50's and 60's. I have a mild hearing loss and found that Costco will test your hearing free and their hearing aids are \$1,500 to \$1,600 dollars. A membership at Costco is \$60 a year. If you have a family member who is a member, they can take you to get tested.

You can reread this information by going to leisuretowne.org, under Residence Resources and click on Heath & Wellness.