

# Did you know?

*The latest from the field of otolaryngology*

## Diagnosing Presbycusis

The term presbycusis refers to sensorineural hearing loss in the elderly population. This hearing loss is bilateral, usually involves the higher frequencies, and is also accompanied by diminished word discrimination. Although the cause is still not clear, studies have shown changes related to aging along the inner ear as well as the central nervous system to be the culprits in this condition.

Approximately 30% of people aged 65-74 years old, and 50% of people ages 75 years and older, have impaired hearing. There is no race or sex predilection, but some studies have shown this condition to be more prevalent in urban societies.

Presbycusis is a *diagnosis of exclusion* that should not be made until all other etiologies of hearing loss have been excluded. The patient's history is usually one of progressive bilateral hearing loss with difficulty understanding words, especially in noisy environments. On physical exam, the ear has normal findings.

Audiometric testing with *pure-tone average* and *speech discrimination* are the two most essential tests for diagnosing presbycusis, and the need for additional testing can usually be determined from the audiometric test results.

Presbycusis is not curable and usually progressive; however, there are many ways to help patients deal with this condition. These include hearing aids, assistive listening devices and even cochlear implants.

Although not curable, further research into the precise pathophysiology of presbycusis may make it a preventable condition.

If your patient is displaying any symptoms of presbycusis or having any other hearing issues, the patient should be referred for further evaluation by a qualified hearing specialist.



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