

Learning About Disabilities

Hearing Impaired/Deaf

A hearing impairment is defined as a diminished or defective sense of hearing. Instead of deafness, many people are hard of hearing, meaning that they have a diminished sense of hearing. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, about 17 percent of adults (30 million) report some degree of hearing loss.

TYPES AND CAUSES OF HEARING LOSS

Conductive hearing loss

This occurs when loss of hearing is a result of problems with the ear canal, ear drum, or middle ear and its little bones (the malleus, incus, and stapes).

Sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL)

This occurs when the hearing loss is a result of problems in the inner ear, also known as nerve-related hearing loss.

Mixed hearing loss

This type of hearing loss is a combination of conductive and sensorineural hearing loss. Mixed hearing loss occurs when there is damage in the outer or middle ear and in the inner ear (cochlea) or auditory nerve.

COMMON MYTHS

Hearing disorders mainly affect the elderly.

Over half of individuals with reduced hearing are under the age of 65. Hearing disorders affect people of all ages.

If I had a hearing impairment I would know.

Hearing loss happens gradually, and the signs are subtle at first. Our ability to adapt to seemingly subtle changes such as progressive hearing loss make it tough to accurately self-diagnose. A simple hearing test can help you gain insight, while professional screening can provide a more definitive answer.

All hearing loss is permanent.

Today, 90% of hearing loss - the kind that's brought on by age or exposure to noise - is very responsive to treatment in the form of technically advanced hearing instruments.

COMMON ACCOMMODATIONS

Interpreters

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may require an interpreter. Interpreters most often transliterate spoken language into sign language. In some cases, individuals who are hard of hearing use an oral interpreter that speaks directly to them, face-to-face, thus allowing the person to read the interpreter's lips.

Note-Takers

Students who are deaf or hearing impaired must visually attend to an interpreter or speaker; therefore, it is difficult for them to take notes. A note-taker can be assigned to help take notes for that student.

FM Amplification

Students who are hard of hearing may benefit from an assistive hearing device that amplifies sound on an FM channel. The student wears a receiver and either has a microphone amplifier or has the instructor wear an amplifier. This device allows the instructor's voice to be directly amplified to the hard of hearing individual.

Captioning

Students who are deaf or hearing impaired may benefit from a variety of captioning options. Captioning allows the individual to read the words as they have been spoken by the instructor or by the speaker in a video presentation.

