



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS OF HEARING LOSS

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Hello Members and Friends of CHHA-BC.

I am a person with hearing loss. I was born without hearing in one ear and partial hearing in the other that has been degenerating. I have always worn hearing aids and, over my lifetime I have witnessed many changes in their technology. There also have been changes in the awareness of hearing loss, with legislation regarding requirements of hearing assistance in public buildings, telecoil installation in telephones, human rights advocacy on discrimination, and closed captioning on television and cell phones.

The following is a list of misconceptions of hearing loss that I recently compiled to offer some insights that people may want to consider. If any of these resonate with you, I encourage you to do further research.

- My hearing will be okay if I have some minor surgery, as my friend has done.
- I have one ear that's down a little, but the other one is okay.
- Deafness is a sign of aging.
- If I had a hearing loss, my family doctor would have informed me.
- My deafness is normal for my age.
- My hearing loss cannot be helped.
- If other people would just talk louder, I would hear just fine.
- As long as I can hear some sound, it's OK to wait to get hearing aids.
- Waiting to get hearing help is OK.
- If I ignore it, it'll go away.
- Your physician always knows when you have deafness.
- If I have a loss of hearing, all sounds will be equally hard for me to perceive.
- I'm ok; my hearing is only bad in one ear.
- My deafness is only my problem.
- Personal sound amplifiers are the same as hearing aids.
- Buying hearing aids online or by mail saves me time and money.
- I can hear through one ear, so I only need one hearing aid.
- I've tried hearing aids before and they didn't work for me.
- I only have trouble hearing certain sounds, not hearing in general, so I don't need hearing aids.
- Tinnitus is an incurable disease.
- Hard of hearing people cannot drive.
- Sign-language is a universal language.

- Hard of hearing people are good lip-readers.
- Hard of hearing people only listen to someone when they feel like it.
- Deafness is hereditary.
- If you talk louder, deaf people can hear.
- Hearing loss can be repaired by medicine or surgery.
- Hearing aids are big and unsightly.

Some myths about hearing loss solved

Myth 1: Ignoring or hiding my hearing loss is much better than using hearing aids.

Fact: An untreated hearing loss is far noticeable than wearing hearing aids. If you respond inappropriately in a conversation, people may question your mental acuity or attention. The consequences of vanity can be life altering. Untreated hearing loss can result in giving up the pleasant sounds that you used to enjoy.

Myth 2: Only people with serious hearing loss need hearing aids.

Fact: The need for hearing amplification depends on your lifestyle and your degree of hearing impairment. If you work in an environment where effective communication is critical, then even mild hearing loss can become intolerant to those around you. If you are living in a rural area and do not have much contact with others, then perhaps even a moderate hearing loss can be tolerable.

Myth 3: Hearing aids make me look old and handicapped.

Fact: There are many factors affecting how you look besides hearing devices. It is just a belief that hearing aids make you look older. Today, manufacturers produce hearing devices with fashion and trends in mind and, as a result, hearing aid stigma may be lessening. For example, many hearing aids can now be synced with an iPhone using Bluetooth, allowing wearers to take calls totally hands free and listen to music and watch videos without earbuds. In addition, many of today's hearing aids are slim and discreet and some are even multi-coloured and jeweled.

Myth 4: Hearing aids make everything sound too loud.

Fact: Indeed, hearing aids act as amplifiers. However, as long as they are properly fitted and adjusted, today's hearing aids are designed so that they won't take already loud sounds and make them even louder. If you've had hearing loss for several years before actually wearing hearing aids, it probably means that you've gone quite a while without hearing those background sounds in your environment. It's the contrast between not hearing them and hearing them that can make them sound noticeable and distracting.

Myth 5: Hearing health professionals are just salespeople who want your money.

Fact: According to research by the Better Hearing Institute, hearing health professionals received a 92% customer satisfaction rating. Moreover, it was also been found that 9 out of 10 people indicated that their quality of life was improved by wearing hearing aids.

A few more facts:

- Hearing loss is worldwide and the biggest health issue after heart disease and arthritis.
- According to the World Health Organization, one out of three people have some hearing loss by age of 65 all over the world.
- People with hearing loss generally wait an average of seven years before taking any medication or seeking treatment, according to the Hearing Loss Association of America.

If you think that you or a loved one shows signs of hearing loss, don't delay in talking to a hearing health professional. Don't waste seven years of your or their life thinking and wondering, "Do I or don't I?" or "Do they or don't they?" before finally getting back at least some of the quality of life you had before. The small sacrifice in undergoing hearing tests and researching the benefits of hearing aids will be well worth it.