



Say That Again?

Missing parts of the conversation? Embarrassed to constantly ask friends and family to repeat themselves? You may be developing hearing loss. It could be genetic, age-related, or noise-induced. Whatever the cause, it's important to diagnose it, and contrary to popular belief, there are options.

For many people, hearing loss is a part of aging. Over 30% of people over age 65 have age-related hearing loss. Among those over 75 years of age, 40%-50% have hearing loss. Age-related hearing loss, called *presbycusis* (pres-bee-KUH-sis), usually happens gradually and affects both ears equally. Presbycusis most commonly involves changes in the inner ear, typically resulting from deterioration of the cells found in the snail-shaped inner ear hearing organ, the *cochlea* (CO-klee-uh).

Age-related hearing loss tends to run in families. However, the cumulative effects of exposure to loud noise, certain autoimmune diseases, and certain medications can also be causes of hearing

loss.

With presbycusis, the ability to hear high-pitched sounds is usually the first to diminish. The voices of women and young children can be hard or impossible to understand. Very often, loud ringing or buzzing is also an annoyance that accompanies this type of hearing loss. This bothersome "ear noise" is called tinnitus (tin-it-us, or tin-EYE-tus). If you suspect hearing loss in yourself or a loved one, it is good idea to plan a visit to the primary care physician or Ear, Nose, Throat doctor. An audiologist can test your hearing to determine whether any loss is present, and give you advice about how to manage both your hearing loss and the tinnitus that may accompany it. Summit ENT has a full-service audiology Department, capable of hearing testing in patients as young as 4 years old. Our audiologists are also trained hearing aid professionals with experience and detailed knowledge of the latest in hearing aid technology.

Ears Ringing Off the Hook?

As mentioned above, tinnitus refers to any bothersome noise that occurs in the ears; ringing, buzzing, swishing, and roaring are a few of the more common noises. In the vast majority of cases, it is not a serious problem, but rather a nuisance that eventually resolves. Nearly 36 million Americans suffer from tinnitus, and in almost all cases, only the patient can actually hear the noise.

Tinnitus can originate in any of the four sections of the ear: the outer ear, middle ear, inner ear, or the brain. Ear wax or foreign bodies in the

auditory canal may cause tinnitus. In the middle ear, fluid or infection might be a cause. If you have high-pitched ringing, buzzing, or any other bothersome noise in the ears, the best thing you can do is to have a thorough examination by an Ear, Nose, and Throat doctor, and a hearing test from a professional audiologist. There is nothing that can be done to cure tinnitus, but there are many effective tricks to getting over it and managing it so that it is not a constant annoyance!

Save Time and Wait Less with Online Registration

Have internet access? If the answer is yes, then you'll love a new feature on our web site. The web site contains loads of useful information, directions, and physician bios. You can also register online,

manage your health information, pay your bills, and request appointments. No more phone calls and no more getting put on hold!

» <http://www.ent-oakland.com>