

Diabetes and Hearing Loss – Quick Facts

- *Hearing loss is twice as common in patients with diabetes as it is in those without the disease.*
- *Hearing loss is 30% higher in patients with pre-diabetes than in those with normal blood sugar.*
- *An association between hearing loss and diabetes is evident as early as ages 30-40 years.*

The Link between Diabetes and Hearing Loss

Diabetics tend to have a *lack of keratin protein* which forms a protective layer within the ear canal, enabling wax to travel outward. Absence or abnormal levels of keratin protein can lead to hearing problems.

Diabetes can cause *deterioration of the epithelial tissue in the ear canal*. This can make the ear canal overly sensitive to the type of plastics commonly used in hearing aids, and can cause yeast, fungus, irritation and infection within the ear.

Neuropathy is a common complication of diabetes. When this nerve damage occurs in the ear's neurological system, people can experience problems hearing and understanding speech and also speaking themselves.

Microvascular complications affecting the retina, kidney, peripheral arteries, and peripheral nerves can also injure the vasculature of the inner ear, resulting in sensori-neural hearing impairment.

“Screening for hearing loss should begin in young adulthood, especially for vulnerable groups, such as diabetics.”