
 **American Diabetes Association.**
ALERT! DAY
Tuesday, March 26

with diabetes, can benefit from hearing aids. In fact, studies show that when people with mild-to-profound hearing loss use hearing aids, they experience decreased depressive symptoms, anxiety and emotional instability; significant improvements in quality of life and functional health status; and have significantly higher self-concepts compared to individuals with hearing loss who do not wear hearing aids. U.S. research also shows that the use of hearing aids reduces the risk of income loss, and that those who use hearing aids are twice as likely to be employed as their peers who do not use hearing aids.⁵

When referring a patient with diabetes for a hearing evaluation, an audiologist can carefully take the individual's overall health

into consideration, communicate the results of the examination to referring providers, and consult regarding recommendations.

It is important to note that today audiologists have many technologically advanced options to offer patients. For individuals resistant to the idea of wearing a hearing aid for cosmetic or other reasons, many hearing aids are nearly or completely invisible. They are available in a wide range of sizes, models and costs. For patients with diabetes, deep-fit, extended-wear devices, such as Lyric, may be contra-indicated. In these cases, special medical clearance is requested from the patient's physician. Hearing evaluations are typically covered by insurance. Hearing aid coverage varies by insurer.

For more information on diabetes, hearing loss and how hearing aids may help, visit www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/seniors/hearing-loss/

For more information about hearing aids, hearing loss, tinnitus, or dizziness/balance, visit www.hearingyourbest.com.

By Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, CCC-A. Dr. Steele is the president of Associated Audiologists, Inc. and is on the medical staffs at Saint Luke's South and Shawnee Mission Medical Center. He is also a clinical assistant professor and has an ad hoc graduate faculty appointment at the University of Kansas Medical Center, where he teaches audiology coursework. Dr. Steele also provides clinical supervision for regional audiology training programs.

References

- 1 Based on the estimate that 40 percent of diabetes is undiagnosed; Cowie et al (2009). Full accounting of Diabetes and Pre-Diabetes in the U.S. Population in 1988-1994 and 2005-2006. *Diabetes Care* 32(2): 287-294.
- 2 Kansas Department of Health and Environment, 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.
- 3 and 4 71st Scientific Sessions of American Diabetes Association, San Diego, June 24-28, 2011. Hirohito Sone, MD, PhD, Tsukuba University Hospital Mito Medical Center, Ibaraki, Japan. Pamela D. Parker, MD, A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Mesa, Ariz.
- 5 Better Hearing Institute, www.betterhearing.org.

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