

# Why You Should Get Your Hearing Checked Today

## Better Hearing

(ARA) – Hearing loss is one of the most common health problems among Americans, with gradual hearing loss affecting millions and often going undetected. No tell-tale signs alert people to changes in their hearing, especially if it progresses slowly. Only a professional hearing screening can determine whether someone is experiencing hearing loss, hearing experts say.

Despite the fact that more than 31 million Americans report some type of hearing problem, only about 13 percent of U.S. physicians routinely screen their patients for hearing loss during physical exams. Complicating matters is the fact that those experiencing difficulties with their hearing often are unaware of their hearing problems.

“Hearing problems often go unrecognized by those people who might be experiencing hearing loss, sometimes taking years before seeking professional help,” says Dr. Kathy Landau Goodman, chairperson of the Audiology Awareness Campaign (AAC), a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise public awareness of hearing loss. May is Better Hearing Month, and a good time to have your hearing checked, she says.

If you think that hearing loss is something that only affects the elderly, think again, Dr. Landau Goodman says. Hearing loss affects all age groups and more than half of hearing impaired are younger than 65, including six million people between the ages of 18 and 44. An estimated 1.5 million school age children are also hearing impaired.

Experts say there are many causes of hearing loss, such as wax build-up in the external ear canal, a condition that is easily treated but unfortunately goes unrecognized in 46 percent of patients. Wax build-up can easily be addressed by using an over-the-counter wax remover like Debrox from GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare. Environmental causes of hearing loss from noisy workplace conditions is also a major factor, as is the growing incidence of noise-induced hearing loss blamed on the popularity of iPods and other MP3 music players -- a growing problem for hearing impairment in young people.

Early hearing loss detection and intervention is the first step to the successful treatment of hearing problems, according to Dr. Landau Goodman.

Hearing loss can be very subtle and develop gradually over many years so that people with hearing impairment don't recognize it. Experts say that a loss of one or two decibels per year is not noticeable, but after 10 to 20 years such hearing loss adds up. In addition, it's not uncommon for people to develop partial hearing loss for high pitched sounds that affect the clarity of speech, but still have normal hearing sensitivity for low pitched sound, in which case they hear other people talking yet can't understand them.

### Free Hearing Screenings

To coincide with Better Hearing Month in May, the AAC has partnered with GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare, makers of Debrox, to bring free hearing screenings to communities around the country so that people can have their hearing screened by audiologists who specialize in evaluating and treating hearing loss. This nationwide effort to make qualified hearing screenings available to the general public free of charge has been dubbed “Listen Up America” Week, and is being held May 5 to 10.

“By offering free hearing screenings throughout the United States, we have the ability to reach many Americans who might otherwise not have access to licensed audiologists who can evaluate their hearing, determine whether they have hearing loss, and then make appropriate recommendations for treating their hearing problems,” says Dr. Landau Goodman.

To find an audiologist in your area conducting free hearing screenings May 5 to 10, as part of "Listen Up America" Week, visit the AAC Web site ([www.audiologyawareness.com](http://www.audiologyawareness.com)) or call the AAC hotline at (888) 833-EARS. All family members, regardless of age, are encouraged to have a free hearing screening.

Courtesy of ARAcontent