

# Hear & now: Preparing for appointments about my hearing

Hearing is not just about being able to hear words and sounds. It goes to the heart of a person's health, well-being, and overall quality of life.<sup>1,2</sup> Good hearing helps keep us socially connected, mentally well, and physically safe, which is why you should take care of your hearing by talking with your primary care doctor.<sup>3</sup> Your primary care doctor may then refer you to an ear doctor, which may include an audiologist or an ear, nose, and throat doctor (ENT).

This guide will provide topics and questions for your appointments, as well as help your doctors understand and create a plan that's tailored to your current hearing health.

## Step 1: Organize questions for my primary care doctor

- 1 What are common signs of hearing loss?
- 2 Where can I get my hearing tested?
- 3 Are you able to refer me to an ear doctor? Do you think I should see an audiologist or ENT?

## Step 2: Prepare for my appointment with an ear doctor

### 1 I have made sure I'm ready for a hearing test (check all that apply)

- ☐ I have avoided loud noises in the last 24 hours (for example, attending a rock music concert)
- ☐ I don't have a cold or illness (or if I do, I'll reschedule)
- ☐ I brought all relevant information
  - ☐ Medical history
  - ☐ List of medications
  - ☐ Family history of hearing loss
  - ☐ Prior test results (even those taken online)

### 2 I know my Hearing Number: \_\_\_\_

Your Hearing Number is a simple metric that represents how loud speech needs to be for you to hear it. To know your Hearing Number, download the Mimi App on the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

### 3 Based on my hearing number, my hearing grade is:

- ☐ Normal Hearing | Hearing Number <25: *No noticeable hearing loss, can have conversations even with background noise*
- ☐ Grade 1 Hearing Loss | Hearing Number 26-34: *Difficulty hearing soft conversations. I feel like background noise drowns out conversations*
- ☐ Grade 2 Hearing Loss | Hearing Number 35-49: *Difficulty with normal conversations. I feel like I need to keep turning up the volume on the TV or radio*
- ☐ Grade 3 Hearing Loss | Hearing Number 50-64: *People need to consistently raise their voice for me to hear them. I have difficulty participating in group conversations*
- ☐ Grade 4 Hearing Loss | Hearing Number 65-79: *Even with hearing aids, it's difficult for me to understand what people say*
- ☐ Grade 5 Hearing Loss | Hearing Number 80-94: *In noisy environments, I cannot hear conversations at all, even if people raise their voice*
- ☐ Grade 6 Hearing Loss | Hearing Number 95+: *I cannot hear speech and most environmental sounds*

**4 I have noted the following symptoms and issues as related to my hearing and balance (check all that apply)**

**a) Physical**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Dizziness/vertigo                      | <input type="radio"/> Changes/fluctuations in hearing |
| <input type="radio"/> Ringing in ears/tinnitus               | <input type="radio"/> Dexterity issues                |
| <input type="radio"/> High blood pressure/hypertension       | <input type="radio"/> Ear pain                        |
| <input type="radio"/> Migraines or headaches                 | <input type="radio"/> Feeling of pressure in the ear  |
| <input type="radio"/> Problems with balance and coordination | <input type="radio"/> Previous ear surgery            |
| <input type="radio"/> Difficulties with walking              | <input type="radio"/> History of noise exposure       |
| <input type="radio"/> Vision/eyesight problems               |   |

**b) Social**

- ☐ Feelings of isolation or loneliness
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Frequent negative emotions such as frustration and resentment
- ☐ Relationship difficulties with family and friends
- ☐ Frequent arguments and misunderstandings with people around me
- ☐ Loss of interest in favorite activities and hobbies

**c) Mental**

- ☐ Memory difficulties such as forgetting events and plans
- ☐ Difficulty remembering names
- ☐ Not recognizing people
- ☐ Brain fog/feeling like my thinking has slowed
- ☐ Difficulties concentrating or focusing

## Step 3: Organize questions for my ear doctor

**1 About my hearing**

- ☐ I think I have a certain grade of hearing loss. Based on my hearing test, what grade is my hearing in each ear?
- ☐ Is it permanent?
- ☐ How will I know if my hearing is getting worse?
- ☐ How do you recommend I protect my hearing?

**2 About my path forward**

- ☐ What are my treatment options? Should I consider surgery?
- ☐ Where can I find financial support or nearby services, such as assistance from a social worker?
- ☐ Can I get a copy of my report to share with my loved ones? How can I best describe this to them?
- ☐ When should I come back? What symptoms should I look for that mean I need to make another appointment?

## Step 4: Take action

**1 Discuss treatment options and next steps with my ear doctor**

**2 Request regular hearing tests (global guidelines recommend adults regularly test their hearing every 1-3 years)<sup>4</sup>**

1. Hughes SE, Boisvert I, McMahon CM, Steyn A, Neal K. Perceived listening ability and hearing loss: systematic review and qualitative meta-synthesis. *PLoS One*. 2022;17(10):e0276265. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0276265
2. Ng ZY, Lamb B, Harrigan S, Archbold S, Athalye S, Allen S. Perspectives of adults with cochlear implants on current CI services and daily life. *Cochlear Implants Int*. 2016;17(suppl 1):89-93. doi:10.1080/14670100.2016.1157314
3. Deafness and hearing loss. World Health Organization. Published February 27, 2023. Accessed April 1, 2023. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss>
4. Cochlear Implant Task Force. Improving the standard of care for adults with hearing loss and the role of cochlear implantation: living guidelines. Published February 25, 2023. Accessed February 25, 2023. [https://files.magicapp.org/guideline/9e0a084d-49be-4954-b92f-6c63825bd723/files/Living\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_cochlear\\_implantation\\_in\\_adults\\_for\\_public\\_consultation\\_r544083.pdf](https://files.magicapp.org/guideline/9e0a084d-49be-4954-b92f-6c63825bd723/files/Living_Guidelines_for_cochlear_implantation_in_adults_for_public_consultation_r544083.pdf)