Hearing Loss Screening in Asia Pacific

A Whole of Life Approach

Hearing health should be a priority at every stage of life. This means hearing checks from birth through to adulthood and easy access to care and interventions whenever needed. The goal is full coverage so everyone can maintain healthy hearing throughout their life.

Children

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends universal newborn hearing screening before hospital discharge or at the first postnatal visit after home birth.[1]

Countries like **China** and **Australia** have strong **government-led** hearing screening programs[2-3]

Other countries rely on **NGOs** and **international collaborations** to implement early hearing detection and intervention (EHDI) programs.[3]

60%

60% of childhood hearing loss in the Western Pacific **is preventable**, mainly due to infections like otitis media and congenital condition.[4]

Newborn hearing screening is **extraordinary** in some Asia Pacific countries such as in **Taiwan** which reported 98.9% coverage rate by the national newborn hearing screening program.[5]

Many developing nations in South and Southeast Asia have **limited** or **no universal screening programs**, especially in rural areas.[6]

10-30%

According to the WHO **10 - 30%** of infants who **do not pass**initial newborn hearing screening are **lost to follow-up**, underscoring the need for improved referral and tracking systems.[7]



Infant Hearing Screening[8-10]

Quick

The screening takes just 5–10 minutes per ear.

Non-invasive

No needles, no discomfort —just soft sounds and gentle sensors.

Easy

Babies often sleep through the entire process.

Screening Methods

Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE): Measures inner ear response to sound.

Automated Auditory Brainstem Response (AABR): Tracks how well sound travels from the ear to the brain.

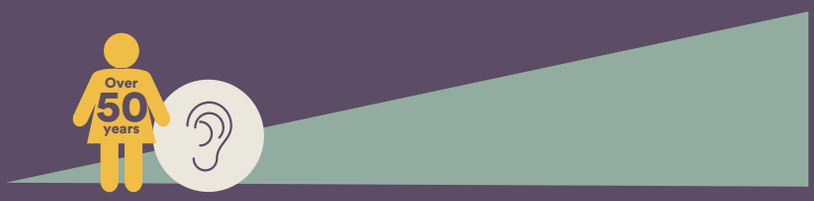
Adults

Adult hearing screening is not routinely practiced in most Asia-Pacific countries.[7] Many adults only seek help when hearing loss becomes severe, leading to delayed intervention.[7]

WHO recommends regular, life-course hearing screening for adults, with **increased frequency as age increases** and when symptoms or risk factors are present.[7]



WHO estimates indicate that **hearing loss prevalence among older adults (>60 years) is significant** across Asia-Pacific, with higher rates in low- and middle-income countries due to limited access to care.[7]



There is strong evidence that hearing loss prevalence among adults over 50 in Asia-Pacific is **high and rising** due to the aging population.[7] According to Global Burden of Disease (GBD) estimates, the global prevalence of hearing loss increased sharply between the early 1990s and 2021, with a relative increase of up to approximately 84%, largely driven by population growth and ageing.[13]



Countries such as **Japan** and **Australia** have **national programs** promoting hearing health, while others (e.g., Indonesia, Philippines) rely on NGOs and private sector efforts for adult hearing screening campaigns.[14-16]



Adult Hearing Screening

Quick

Hearing screening for adults are quick (under an hour). **Hearing Screening typically** measures responses to sounds of different pitches using headphones. Hearing screening often doesn't measure thresholds, but measure the response at a level considered normal. e.g. 20dBHL, or 45dBHL depending on the population and environment.[17]

Non-invasive

All tests are safe and well-tolerated. No needles, no discomfort—just soft sounds. Pure-tone audiometry and speech tests typically involves wearing headphones and responding to sounds.[18]

Recommended

Screening is recommended from age 50 onward to detect early hearing loss.[7]

Accessible

Many people visit ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) specialists or audiology departments in hospitals for comprehensive hearing evaluations.[19]

Hearing Screening Access for Seniors Across Asia Pacific

Screening programs are under-implemented in many countries however free hearing tests are most consistently available in Australia, Singapore, and Taiwan.[7] Other countries rely on community programs or subsidies.[7]

Country	Free Hearing Screening Availability	Eligibility
Australia[20]	***Yes*** – through the Hearing Services Program.[20]	Seniors with pension or veterans' card[20], any adult with a disability pension
China[21-22]	***Limited*** - Under the National Aged Care Plan, as part of routine senior care.[21-22]	All residents aged >60 years[21-22]
Japan[23]	***Yes*** - Tokyo wards (Katsushika, Minato, Nakano) offer scheduled hearing screenings at local clinics. Other municipalities (Okayama, Tajiri, Matsudo) host regular free screenings for seniors.[23]	Aimed at residents aged 60–75 years.[23]
Malaysia[24]	***Yes*** –free screenings for select seniors.[24]	Civil servants, veterans and low-income earners.[24]
New Zealand[25-26]	***Limited*** - District Health Board (DHB) host Community Ear Health Clinics in some regions (e.g., Auckland's Te Toka Tumai).[25-26]	Residents with complex cases.[25-26]
Philippines[7,27]	***Yes*** – via NGOs & Health drives.[7,27]	Seniors in underserved areas.[7,27]
South Korea[28]	***Yes*** - Local public health centers (보건소) offer free or low-cost hearing assessments.[28]	Open to all seniors aged >60 years.[28]
Singapore[29]	***Yes*** – Project Silver Screen.[29]	All residents aged >60 years[29]
Taiwan[30]	***Limited*** – community programs (PSA Foundation).[30]	All residents aged >65 years.[30]

Cochlear Hearing Quiz*

Are you hearing your best? If you're wondering whether your hearing has changed, Cochlear offers a simple, quick, and free online hearing quiz.* The quiz takes only a few minutes and asks easy questions about everyday listening situations—like following conversations in noisy places or hearing on the phone—and gives you an instant indication of whether you might benefit from a professional hearing check.

Why start with an online quiz? It's convenient, and stress-free. Many people delay hearing tests for years. An online quiz gives you a quick snapshot of your hearing health without leaving home.

Take the Cochlear Hearing Quiz online today
www.cochlear.com

References and disclaimers

Please seek advice from your health professional about treatments for hearing loss. Outcomes may vary, and your health professional will advise you about the factors which could affect your outcome. Always follow the directions for use. Not all products are available in all countries. Please contact your local Cochlear representative for product information.

*The Cochlear Online Hearing Quiz is not a diagnostic evaluation, please consult a hearing healthcare professional

1. World Health Organization. Universal newborn screening: Implementation guidance. April 2024. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789290211389
2. Wen C and Huang L-H (2023) Newborn hearing screening program in China: a narrative review of the issues in screening and management. Front. Pediatr. 11:1222324. doi: 10.3389/fped.2023.1222324
3. Leigh G, McMahon C. Spreading the word: how Australia's experience can influence newborn hearing health in the Asia Pacific [Internet]. Sydney: Australian Hearing Hub; 2023 Jul 21 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://hearinghub.edu.au/2023/07/21/spreading-the-word-how-australias-experience-can-influence-newborn-hearing-health-in-the-asia-pacific/
4. World Health Organization. Deafness and hearing loss – impact. Online [Last accessed December 2025] Available at: https://www.who.int/western-pacific/health-topics/hearing-loss#tab=tab_2
5. Taiwan News. Taiwan newborn hearing screening rate one of world's best [Internet]. 2024 Oct 19 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://taiwannews.com.tw/news/5954841
6. Olusanya, B. O. (2015). Screening for neonatal deafness in resource-poor countries: challenges and solutions. Research and Reports in Neonatology, 5, 51–64. https://doi.org/10.2147/RRN.S61862
7. World Health Organization. World report on hearing [Internet]. Geneva: WHO; 2021 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/world-report-on-hearing
8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Newborn hearing screening: a parent's guide to hearing loss [Internet]. Atlanta (GA): CDC; updated 2024 May 15 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children-guide/parents-guide/newborn-hearing-screening.html
9. World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Newborn Care. Hearing screening in newborns [Internet]. New Delhi: WHO Collaborating Centre; 2019 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.newbornwhocc.org/pdf/Hearing_Screening_2019.pdf
10. Hearing Australia. Newborn hearing screening [Internet]. Sydney (NSW): Hearing Australia; [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.hearing.com.au/our-services/children/newborn-hearing-screening
11. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Adult hearing screening [Internet]. Rockville (MD): ASHA; [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/adult-hearing-screening/
12. Hearing Australia. Adult hearing checks [Internet]. Sydney (NSW): Hearing Australia; [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.hearing.com.au/our-services/adults
13. GBD 2021 Hearing Loss Collaborators. Global prevalence and years lived with disability for hearing loss in 204 countries and territories, 1990–2021. Lancet Glob Health. 2024;12(1):e15–34. doi:10.1016/S2214-109X(23)00465-1
14. World Health Organization. Country profile: Japan – ear and hearing care [Internet]. Geneva: WHO; 2023 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.who.int/-publications/i/item/WHO-UCN-NCD-Ear-and-hearing-care-JPN
15. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Hearing Services Program [Internet]. Canberra: Australian Government; 2025 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/hearing-services-program
16. Chua K, De Luna Balcos K, Relator RO, Sabalberino EB, Yeo H. Ear and hearing screening of an underserved community in the Philippines. J Glob Health Econ Policy. 2025;5:e2025008. doi:10.7189/001c.134072
17. British Society of Audiology. Pure-tone air-conduction and bone-conduction threshold audiometry with and without masking. BSA; 2018.
18. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Audiologic assessment [Internet]. Rockville (MD): ASHA; 2023 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/audiologic-assessment/
19. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Hearing tests for adults [Internet]. Bethesda (MD): National Institutes of Health; 2023 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing-tests
20. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Hearing Services Program [Internet]. Canberra: Australian Government; 2025 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/hearing-services-program
21. International Federation on Ageing. Increasing cross-sectoral collaboration in advocacy efforts for ear and hearing care services: China [Internet]. Toronto: IFA; 2025 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://ifa.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Report_Ear_Hearing_China.pdf
22. World Health Organization. Caring for the health of the elderly in China [Internet]. Geneva: WHO; 2021 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/caring-for-the-health-of-the-elderly-in-china
23. International Federation on Ageing. Increasing cross-sectoral collaboration in advocacy efforts for ear and hearing care services: Japan [Internet]. Toronto: IFA; 2025 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://ifa.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Report_Ear_Hearing_Japan.pdf
24. Malaysia Government. Health screening for the elderly [Internet]. MyGOV; updated 10 Oct 2025 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.malaysia.gov-.my/en/personas/senior-citizens/menjaga-kesihatan-warga-emas/health-screening-for-the-elderly [malaysia.gov.my]
25. McCarthy H, Manuel AR, Garland R, et al. A scoping review of ear and hearing health research in Aotearoa New Zealand: a focus on equity. J R Soc N Z. 2025;55(3):611-632.
26. Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora – Te Toka Tumai Auckland. Audiology Service – eligibility and scope [Internet]. Auckland; updated 2024 [cited 2026 Jan–6]. Available from: https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/allied-health/audiology-service-auckland-te-toka-tumai/
27. Chua K, De Luna Balcos K, Relator RO, Sabalberino EB, Yeo H.Ear and hearing screening of an underserved community in the Philippines. J Glob Health Econ Policy. 2025;5:e2025008. doi:10.7189/001c.134072
28. Ministry of Health and Welfare (KR). 청력관리 프로그램 요약 정리: 무료 청력검사 및 보청기 지원 [Internet]. Sejong: Ministry of Health and Welfare; 2025 [cited 2026 Jan–6].
29. Ministry of Health (Singapore). More seniors to benefit from functional screening [Internet]. Singapore: Ministry of Health; 2018 Sep 19 [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.moh.gov.sg/newsroom/more-seniors-to-benefit-from-functional-screening/
30. PSA Charitable Foundation (華科慈善基金會).Community-based hearing health care service for seniors [Internet]. New Taipei City: PSA Charitable Foundation; 2015–present [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://www.psa.org.tw/en/services-2/hear/elderhearing/ [psa.org.tw]

www.cochlear.com

D2429479 © Cochlear Limited 2026. Cochlear, Hear now. And always, and the elliptical logo are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Cochlear Limited.