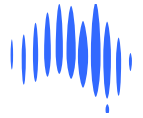


The link between diabetes and hearing loss



Hearing loss and diabetes are two of Australia's most common health concerns and there is a link between the two conditions. Research shows that people living with diabetes are twice as likely to suffer hearing loss as those without the condition.

Why is diabetes a risk factor for hearing loss?

The structure of the inner ear is highly vascularised. Therefore hearing loss can result from changes to the small blood vessels of the inner ear. There is evidence that diabetes may lead to sensorineural hearing loss by damaging the nerves and blood vessels of the inner ear.

The physical and psychological effects of hearing loss are well established and can be debilitating. It is also critical that hearing loss is not left unmanaged due to the risk of co-morbidities.

Interventions are aimed at reducing the effect of the damage and restoring function. It is very important that the brain continues to be stimulated by hearing and understanding words.

Amplification of sound using hearing aids or cochlear implants can be an effective management option. Practical support includes referral to Hearing Australia, to local private practice audiology services and to local support groups.

What are the implications for you and your patient?

1. It is important that patients living with diabetes understand the risks and long-term implications of hearing loss.
2. Annually screening the hearing of patients with diabetes allows for early diagnosis, and more effective management.
3. Patients living with diabetes should be reminded of the importance of reporting any hearing loss to their doctor.
4. Doctors play a critical role in recognising the mental health risks of hearing loss in patients living with diabetes and helping prevent the onset of withdrawal, isolation or depression.

For more information about assessing and managing hearing loss visit hearing.com.au

"Hearing loss occurs twice as frequently in people with diabetes."

Sturt Eastwood, CEO, Diabetes NSW/ACT

Horikawa, C., et al., 2013, "Diabetes and risk of hearing impairment in adults: a meta-analysis," *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology Metabolism* Volume 98, Number 1, pp.51-8.

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