

Script – Broadcast – Diabetes and hearing loss

INTRO

There are many health complications for people living with diabetes including heart and kidney disease, oral health and vision problems. You can add hearing loss to the list. There are 28 million people in the U.S. with hearing loss and 37 million living with diabetes.

According to Chris Workman, AuD, an audiologist with OSF HealthCare, people with diabetes are twice as likely to suffer from hearing loss compared to those who don't. Even people with prediabetes have a 30% higher rate of hearing loss than people with normal blood sugar levels.

The link appears to be nerve damage. All senses rely on good blood flow and nerve function. Dr. Workman says blood vessels feed the nerves, which are crucial to good hearing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the average person is born with about 16,000 hair cells within their inner ear, which allow your brain to detect sounds. By the time most people notice a change in their hearing, 30% to 50% of hair cells have already been damaged or destroyed. And they do not grow back.

(((SOT)))

Dr. Chris Workman, Audiologist, OSF HealthCare

"I believe high blood sugar could potentially affect the blood flow to the inner ear and some of the hair cells which could affect and cause some hearing loss. Low blood sugar could cause some damage to the nerve and transmission of the hearing." (:15)

VO

Dr. Workman adds that for the past 10-15 years the audiology field has seen a rise in patients who also have diabetes – including in his own practice. For those patients, especially those who have other comorbidities such as hypertension, screening tests are especially important.

For those patients, Dr. Workman recommends an annual hearing test as well diet, exercise and taking their medication as needed to get better control of diabetes. Otherwise, he adds, they're prone to potential hearing loss and more severe loss. Hearing loss can also lead to depression and isolation.

TAG

The month of May is National Speech-Language-Hearing Month. It's a time which raises the importance of taking care of your hearing.

There are many signs of hearing loss.

- Ringing in the ears
- A tendency to assume everyone is mumbling
- Difficulty understanding what people are saying
- Needing to turn the TV volume up high

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these problems, Dr. Workman recommends contacting your primary care provider.