

Cardiovascular Disease & Hearing Loss: Is the Ear a Window to the Heart?

The inner ear is sensitive to changes in blood flow, and compromised cardiovascular health may harm both the peripheral and central auditory systems. New research reveals that a healthy heart may be the key to healthy hearing.

Facts & Stats

- An individual's risk of hearing loss increases by 15.1% if he or she is a persistent smoker²
- Patients with vascular abnormalities may complain of pulsatile tinnitus. Pulsatile tinnitus is the type of noise that is perceived as a rhythmic pulsing that is often in time with the heartbeat. It can be experienced as a thumping or whooshing sound^{3,4}
- Women with a history of heart attack are 2.7 times more likely to have impaired cochlear function⁵
- Higher BMI and larger waist circumference in women is associated with an increased risk of hearing loss, and higher physical activity is associated with reduced risk of hearing loss in women⁶
- Waist circumference has been found to be an independent risk factor of age-related hearing impairment in males younger than 55 years⁷

What You Can Do To Help

A healthy cardiovascular system has a positive impact on hearing. Conversely, inadequate blood flow and trauma to the blood vessels of the inner ear can contribute to hearing loss.⁸ Patients at risk for developing heart disease, or those already diagnosed, should be especially vigilant about their hearing health and have their hearing screened on a regular basis; heart disease, hypertension, or any other restriction of blood supply to the auditory system can cause permanent hearing loss and can be progressive in nature.⁹

The best method of treatment for all disease is prevention, and heart disease and hearing loss are no exception. All adults over the age of 55 years should be referred for a baseline diagnostic audiological evaluation. A healthy heart and hearing are not only beneficial to one's physical well-being but are also beneficial to a positive outcome and overall quality of life.

References

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