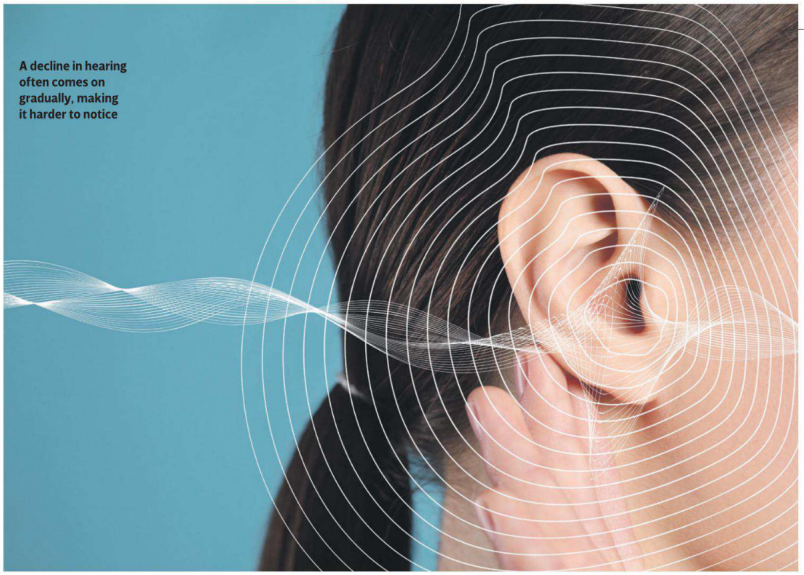


A decline in hearing often comes on gradually, making it harder to notice

CATCH THE WHOLE CONVERSATION

Around a third of UK adults experience some kind of hearing change. The benefits of spotting problems early go way beyond our ears

Ever found yourself laughing along awkwardly even though you didn't quite catch the joke?

If the answer is yes, you are not alone. One in three adults in the UK – 18 million – struggle with hearing change in at least one ear. This can make an evening in the pub, a cinema trip or even just a bit of banter with the barista at your local coffee shop an exercise in faking it.

Trying to get by with hearing change can make socialising a strain, especially in noisy environments, as your brain works overtime, attempting to fill in verbal gaps.

But if you have been getting by, settling for catching most of what is said, or straining to get the gist, you may be missing out on more than you realise.

Hearing change often comes on gradually in adults. That can make it harder to notice when the subtler cadences in, say, a much-loved piece of music start to slip away or when the thrill of lively conversation in which you've usually followed every word begins to fade.

We know some animals, such as dogs, can hear frequencies that we can't. But for humans, precision hearing is a sensory superpower. Scientists recently discovered that humans may be better than any other species at distinguishing between similar sounds,* which is probably related to our unique capacity for complex communication through language.

However, as a nation, it seems many of us are getting by on hearing that's just OK.

A lot of people tend to think of diminished hearing as simply a normal part of ageing. And while it is common, it doesn't have to be the norm. There is no reason to settle for "kind of" hearing the song, "sort of" following the conversation or "mostly" understanding the video.

Especially when good hearing has a positive impact that goes well beyond just your ears. For example, being able to hear clearly has a knock-on impact on cognitive function** and balance. The better you can hear, the better you can tune in to the people and the world around you.

That's why the people at Specsavers are making it their aim to help the people of Britain hear more clearly and be part of the conversation.

*Sources: *Hebrew University of Jerusalem – sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/04/080401095216.htm; **NIH/ Johns Hopkins University – nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/hearing-aids-slow-cognitive-decline-people-high-risk*

SOUND ADVICE

By providing free access to qualified hearing experts in convenient locations across the country, Specsavers is on a mission to get Britain hearing well. Catching problems early is crucial to reduce further damage. Specsavers offers a comprehensive hearing check with an in-house hearing expert, free of charge to anyone over the age of 18 who suspects they have a change in hearing. You can book online and over the phone or pop in to your nearest Specsavers for a hearing check and get it sorted.

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