

## Life Times Blog



### ALDs: Situation specific help for hearing loss

Hearing loss affects all ages. In the United States, an estimated two or three children out of every 1,000 are born with a detectable level of hearing loss. For adults, the number climbs to 37.5 million (15%).

For those with medium to high levels of hearing loss, the most common treatment or approach to the problem is 'Hearing Aids.' A hearing aid is a medical device that amplifies all sounds in an environment.

An environment can have sounds from a variety of sources like people talking, machines operating, background music, etc. The device makes all sounds louder so a person can hear them better.



But in some situations, the amplification makes it harder to hear and understand what a person is saying because the device cannot separate sounds. There are alternative devices available for those situations called Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). ALDs are more effective at separating sounds when a person communicates in one-to-one conversations. They make it easier for the person using the device to understand the words being spoken.

ALDs are best suited for applications like phone conversations, places of worship, and theaters. One of the most popular ALDs is in the image for this story. ALDs can be purchased online through a dealer or medical professional like an audiologist and at a Hear For Life Center.

It is best to make an appointment with a Hear For Life® Audiologist rather than visiting a hearing aid dealer. They are medical professionals with master's degrees in helping people with hearing problems. They also often work in conjunction with an Ear, Nose & Throat physician.

Some states have special programs to help hard-of-hearing individuals and provide ALDs at either no or a low cost. To learn more, contact your local Hear For Life® Center or visit [www.hearforlife.com](http://www.hearforlife.com).

## Hearing conservation: saving your natural resources

The word "conservation" is often applied to saving natural resources such as forests or rivers. But there's another natural resource that's well worth saving: your ability to hear.

These days our hearing is under constant assault, from loud music, lawn mowers, power tools, motorboats, and other by-products of our noisy age. Studies have shown that prolonged exposure to noise levels as low as 80 decibels can cause hearing loss. The average sound intensity near an airport is much greater than this.



Noise-induced hearing loss happens gradually. People usually lose high-pitched sounds first: rustling leaves, singing birds, a child's whisper. This can make understanding speech difficult, because many of the subtle sounds that distinguish similar sounding words from another are high-frequency sounds.

Fortunately, you can protect your hearing with a small investment in hearing protection. A wide variety of effective products are available, ranging from inexpensive foam plugs to more expensive electronic devices that only block out loud sounds.

Sports fans (especially those attending auto races), gun shooters, power equipment users, or people who use high-powered engines should be especially careful about preserving their hearing.

There's no reason to let noise rob you of your hearing! You can easily join the conversation moment and protect your own natural ability to hear. To learn more, contact your local Hear For Life® Center or visit [www.hearforlife.com](http://www.hearforlife.com).

## What's Ringing?

Do you often hear a ringing noise that no one else hears? Maybe it seems like there's a bell or buzzer going off inside your ears? To some it is a high-pitched ringing, whining, or hissing sound, like listening to a conch shell. For others it may be a low roaring noise. However, you describe it, the cause can be Tinnitus.



Tinnitus—often simply referred to as "ringing in the ears" or "head noises"—is a sound heard in one or both ears. It can develop in people of all ages and backgrounds. But people who are older or have had a lot of exposure to loud noises are especially at risk. There are a variety of causes including loud noise, medications, and aging. Others include earwax blockage, injury to the ears, neck or head, Neurological disorders, degeneration of bones in the middle ear, and upper respiratory infections or jaw popping joint (TMJ).

The level of intensity for some can be very mild, and noticeable only in a quiet room. For others, it can become so loud and annoying the victim hears nothing else. Tinnitus can be persistent, intermittent, or throbbing depending on the cause. For some it is severe enough to make them incapacitated from the pressure, unsteadiness, or dizziness.

There's no known cure for tinnitus, but there are ways to management it that can give you relief. Hearing aids can be an effective way to treat Tinnitus as well as hearing loss. To learn more, contact your local Hear For Life Center®.