



It's important to protect your ears when working with loud machinery.

Noise the big offender

THE major preventable cause of hearing loss is noise injury.

An estimated 37 per cent of hearing loss is due to noise injury, which could have been prevented. Hearing loss is mainly on the increase due to leisure activities such as personal music players and social and recreational noise.

Young people and farmers are at great risk. Why farmers?

Because they turn up their music player headphones to block out machinery noise, such as tractors.

This noise injury also increases their risk of tinnitus.

Noise-related hearing loss among young adults is concerning.

Their ears are ageing faster than they should be.

Hearing is damaged by the loudness of the signal, the amount of time you are exposed,

and how often.

The type of ear phones people use can have an effect.

Some earbuds are poor-fitting, and users may turn up the volume to try to block out background noise, which increases the risk of noise injury.

Hearing loss associated with noise exposure can occur at any age and is often characterised by the difficulty in understanding speech and the presence of tinnitus.

This form of hearing loss is almost entirely preventable.

Deafness is one of the most common disabilities worldwide.

One in six Australians has some form of hearing impairment – that's 3.55 million people.

The number of Australians with deafness is expected to increase to one in four by 2050.

Hearing loss may affect cognition

SOMETIMES older people who appear to be slipping mentally simply can't hear.

When fitted for a hearing aid, their cognition returns.

But sometimes people who can't hear well really do decline mentally, faster than people with normal hearing, according to Dr Frank Lin, a professor at the Johns Hopkins Center on Aging and Health.

In a recent study of nearly 2000 older people published in JAMA Internal Medicine, Dr Lin found that those with hearing loss – about half – experienced 30 to 40 per cent more cognitive decline a year than those with normal hearing.

That translated into a 24 per cent increase in the risk of cognitive decline – or put another way, people with hearing loss would decline by five points on a standard test of memory and cognition in 7.7 years, while people with normal hearing would take 10.9 years to decline as much.

Would getting a hearing aid reduce the risk of

cognitive decline?

No one knows for sure, but correcting a hearing problem is always a good idea, Dr Lin said.

"Whether treatment of hearing loss could reduce cognitive decline and affect cognitive health, though, still remains completely unknown," he said.

The rate of cognitive decline increased with the severity of the hearing loss, according to the study.

Hearing loss increases steadily with age, and is more common than previously believed, according to a 2011 study by Dr Lin and his colleagues published in the Journal of Gerontology.

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders reported hearing loss affects about 47 per cent of people aged 75 and over, but Dr Lin and his group found nearly two-thirds of people aged 70 and over had significant hearing loss.

AAP



Have your hearing checked regularly.

Australian Hearing is offering pensioners and veterans **free hearing checks** this Hearing Awareness Week.

Australian Hearing Nowra
19 Nowra Lane, Nowra NSW 2541



Keeping up appearances more important than hearing

Research reveals Australians over 50 miss out in fear of looking old

AUSTRALIANS over 50 are willing to put up with poor hearing even if they miss out on social occasions with their friends and family, research by Australian Hearing has revealed.

The research, released to mark Hearing Awareness Week (August 25-31), gauged the attitudes of over 1300 Australians aged over 50 towards their hearing.

More than half (55 per cent) of those surveyed believe they can live a normal life with reduced hearing, even if it means asking people to repeat themselves, avoiding social situations and misunderstanding doctor's instructions.

A quarter of Australians over 50 believe there is a stigma attached to wearing hearing aids.

This includes being worried about being viewed as old and being embarrassed to be seen wearing hearing aids in public.

"It's concerning that people are avoiding taking action about their hearing simply because they feel they'll be perceived as looking old,"

Australian Hearing Nowra manager Sandy Miles said.

"The irony is that by choosing to not do anything about your hearing, you actually draw even more attention to your problem.

"Often it's friends or relatives that notice the problem first but don't say anything out of politeness."

According to the research, even those with diagnosed hearing loss don't do anything about it.

Respondents to the survey wait an average of just over four years to get help for their hearing loss – almost half (47 per cent) of Australians over

50 said they didn't think their hearing was bad enough, and 40 per cent said that they just put up with the problem.

"What many people don't realise is that hearing technology is constantly evolving and improving. Take hearing aids for example. There's absolutely no comparison between today's almost invisible hearing aids and their older counterparts," Ms Miles said.

"And people should also remember that losing your hearing doesn't always lead to a hearing aid. Sometimes it's just hearing the television, conversing on the phone or hearing the doorbell that's the issue. There are many solutions other than hearing aids available to help improve your life.

"There's really no excuse to not do something about your hearing.

"It's as simple as a free 15 minute hearing check and the sooner you take action, the better your quality of life and health will be."

Ms Miles said that Hearing Awareness Week provided an ideal reminder for Australians to take action to improve their hearing health.

On Thursday, September 5 Australian Hearing will team up with Terry White Chemists Shoalhaven to offer free hearing checks between 9am and midday.

She added that free hearing checks are also available for adults at the Australian Hearing centre located in Nowra at any time.

For more information call Australian Hearing on 131 797 or visit www.hearing.com.au

To book a free hearing check at Terry White Chemists, visit www.terrywhitechemists.com.au