



SENIORCARE OPTIONS

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**Candor. Compassion.
Competence.**

Aging Life Care Management
for the Metro Atlanta Area
Assisting medically frail seniors,
disabled adults, & their caregivers



Age Related Hearing Loss – Where should I turn for help?

For the “boomers” it’s 1 in 6 – and for those over 60 specifically, it’s 3 in 10...

What is it? It’s HEARING LOSS! However,

as much as we like to think this is something that just happens when one becomes older – the majority of people in this country with hearing loss are under 65! Because it’s overly associated with aging, hearing loss is not seen as a potentially treatable condition.

Hearing is a delicate process that requires the outer ear that we can see (as a way to channel soundwaves deeper), the middle ear (which creates vibrations through the eardrum and small bones who work in synch to amplify sound), and the inner ear (consisting of the sensory organs for hearing and balance which convert the sound waves to nerve impulses to the brain). This entire process allows us to hear!

Although hearing loss can have many causes, there are typically 2 main types of hearing loss – Conductive and Sensorineural.

Conductive hearing loss is simply defined as sound not being properly transmitted to the inner ear. This could be caused by treatable conditions such as earwax buildup or middle ear fluid.

Sensorineural hearing loss is caused by damage to the nerve endings in the inner ear or hearing nerve – and this type of loss is best helped through the use of hearing aids or devices.

So, if one notices that speech is difficult to understand on the telephone, in noisy restaurants, or to understand voices at a whisper... If there are frequent comments about one’s inability to hear, frequent requests to repeat what is said, or the TV volume so loud it could be heard next door... it may be time to have this condition checked!

But, where does one start? We strongly recommend the use of 2 types of hearing professionals – an Otolaryngologist (better known as a ENT) and an Audiologist – for ideal assessment of hearing loss. Please note: The FDA requires a medical evaluation by a licensed physician before purchasing hearing devices!

ENT physicians work with patients regarding diseases and disorders of the ear, nose, throat, and related structures to the head and neck. They have specialized training in the medical and surgical treatment of hearing loss, ear infections, balance disorders, tinnitus (or “ringing in the ears”), and some cranial nerve disorders. ENT physicians have approximately 15 years training after high school (including college, medical school, and post-graduate training).

Audiologists are professionals who diagnose and treat hearing and balance problems – who have received a Doctorate in Audiology (some Master’s programs are also accredited). They provide extensive assessment of a hearing abnormality and are responsible for the evaluation, fitting, and verification of amplification devices (hearing aids) – as well as provide education and counseling regarding the effects of hearing loss psycho-emotionally, socially, and vocationally.

Due to the complex need for assessment, diagnosis, and treatment options regarding hearing loss, we do not recommend only utilizing a **Hearing Aid Dispenser (in person or through media advertisements)**– who is someone authorized by the state solely to measure one’s hearing and to fit

and sell hearing aids. The credentials can vary – however, these professionals are not required to have a college degree related to hearing loss – yet, are typically required to have an apprenticeship and pass necessary tests about hearing aids. It’s important to ask one’s qualifications, education, and experience.

If hearing loss is suspected, please seek proper assessment, diagnosis and treatment. It can protect against potential isolation, embarrassment, anger, stress, and avoidance of social environments!

Resources Available

American Academy of Audiology – www.howsyourhearing.org

American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
www.entnet.org

Assistive Devices for People with Hearing, Voice, Speech, or Language Disorders – Through the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders
<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/pages/assistive-devices.aspx>

Medicare coverage for Hearing/Balance Exams & Hearing Aids -
<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/hearing-and-balance-exam-and-hearing-aids.html>

Signs of Hearing Loss (Socially, Emotionally, & Medically) – Through the Better Hearing Institute:
<http://www.betterhearing.org/hearingpedia/signs-hearing-loss>

Support Group Information

Lacy Doremus, LMSW, C-ASWCM, facilitates a monthly caregiver support group at 7pm at Presbyterian Village - conference room between Hearthstone and Wellness center. The address is 2000 E West Connector Austell, GA and meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month at 7pm.

About SeniorCare Options

SeniorCare Options provides Certified Aging Life Care Management throughout the Metro-Atlanta area. Our team consists of Master’s level clinicians in the fields of counseling, social work, therapeutic recreation, and registered nursing. Our backgrounds are vast and specific to the current clinical needs of our clients and their families who may be in transition, have chronic or difficult-to-manage conditions, and who require increased guidance. Our interdisciplinary focus, extensive experience, and heightened sensitivity to their specific needs prove to be an invaluable asset to families faced with the maze of options and care needs. **For more information** regarding Aging Life Care Management services, our support groups, or to inquire about requesting services for someone under your care, **please contact us at: 770-579-9177 or brandih@seniorcareopt.com.**