

Hearing Loss

There are several different types of hearing loss, depending on which part of the hearing pathway is affected. We can help you figure out where in the hearing pathway the problem is. There are two most common types of hearing loss: Sensorineural and Conductive.

Sensorineural hearing loss is a nerve loss in the inner ear (cochlea). The cochlea has approximately 30,000 hearing nerve endings (hair cells). The hair cells in the large end of the cochlea respond to very high-pitched sounds, and those in the small end (and throughout much of the rest of the cochlea) respond to low-pitched sounds. These hair cells, and the nerve that connects them to the brain, are susceptible to damage from a variety of causes, but most commonly noise.

Conductive hearing loss can be caused by serous otitis media (ear infections) and otosclerosis (when the little bone called the stapes quits moving). This condition interferes with the transmission of sound through the outer and middle ear to the inner ear. This type of hearing loss can be successfully treated in most cases.

Treatment for your hearing loss may be surgical or it may be recommended that you get a hearing aid evaluation and placement of a hearing aid. For certain patients, cochlear implants are an option. Hearing aids provide amplification of sound (for most people with sensorineural hearing loss, amplification is the best or only option). Selecting a proper hearing aid requires skilled evaluation and testing with numerous devices and electronic adjustments.

Hearing aids vary greatly in style and cost. Some fit almost entirely within the ear and are nearly invisible. We can discuss the best match for you based on your budget and lifestyle needs.

Surgery may be the most appropriate treatment for mechanical causes such as chronic ear infections or conductive hearing loss.

The diagnosis of hearing loss requires a visit to an Ear, Nose Throat Physician that provides a complete Audiology Department for a comprehensive audiogram (hearing test) and any other testing Dr. Sewell thinks is appropriate in your case.