

Communication with a Loved One with Hearing Loss



North Shore Community Association

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Today's Agenda

Learning Objectives: This two part interactive presentation will engage the participants to reflect on the following topics

Part 1 - Communication with a Loved One with Hearing Loss

- ▶ Hearing and understanding: What is the difference
- ▶ How to recognize hearing loss in yourself or your loved one
- ▶ Tips to improve communication.

▶ **Part 2 – Communication in End of Life & the Compassionate Care Program**

- ▶ Listening as an equal partner with speaking in communication
- ▶ Active listening... how to get better at it
- ▶ Why is communication so difficult....especially at end of life?
- ▶ The ***Compassionate Care Program***... an overview
- ▶ Some helpful "*links*"



A Little Pre Test

Seniors with “Ski Slope Hearing Loss” have difficulty hearing:

➤ Please check the appropriate categories:

- Vacuum cleaner
- Conversations
- Birds chirping
- Fridge motor

Wearing hearing aids will make my ear “lazy”

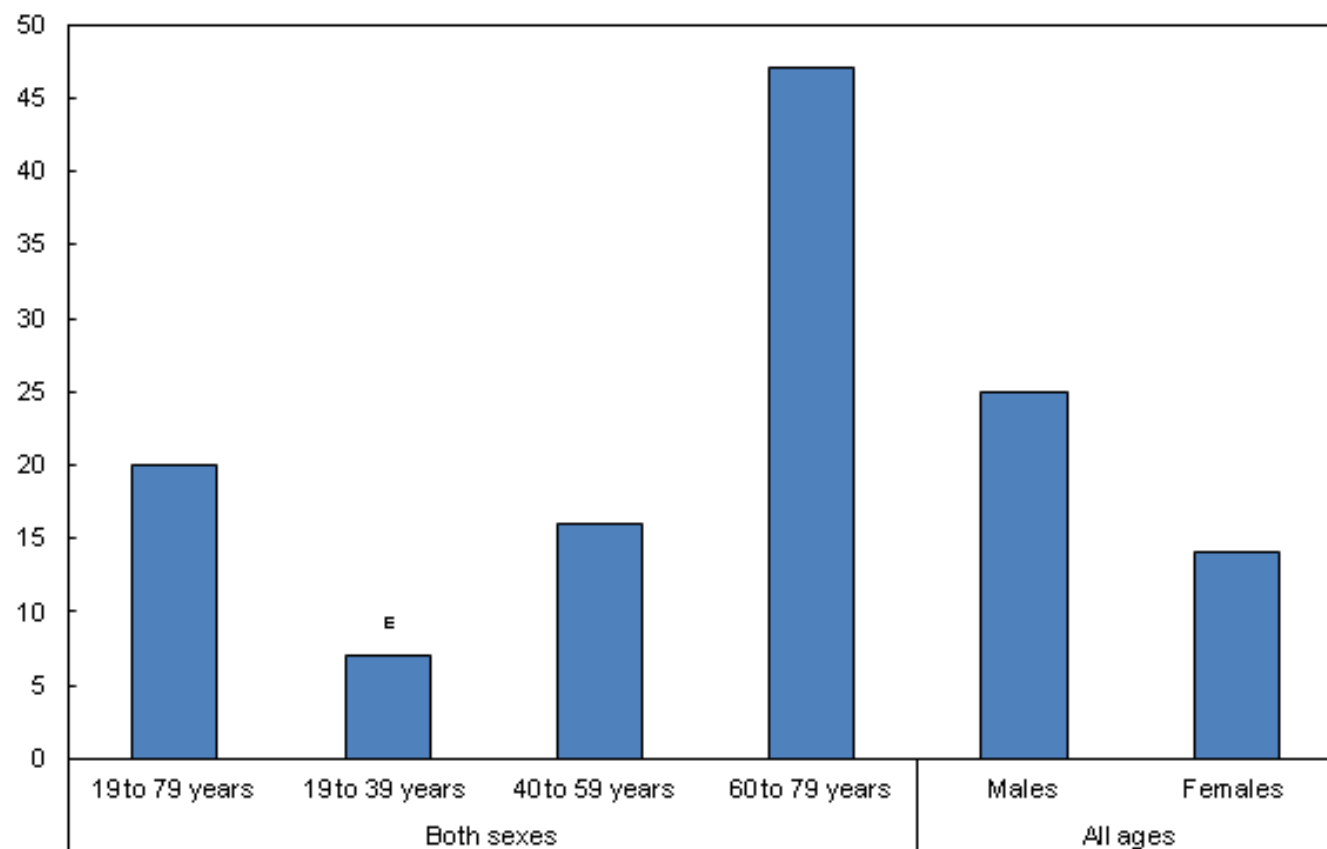
- True
- False

A Few Statistics

- ▶ Hearing loss is the fastest growing, and one of the most common, chronic conditions facing Canadians today. **46%** of Canadians aged 45 to 87 have hearing loss.
- ▶ With **unmanaged hearing loss**, older adults may become withdrawn and socially isolated which can lead to the breakdown of support networks and the risk of depression.
- ▶ Older adults with unmanaged hearing loss are at an **increased risk of cognitive decline** and developing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. However, there is encouraging evidence that hearing assistance, such as a hearing aid, can improve the lives of even those with significant dementia.
- ▶ Research has revealed that there is a **greater risk of falling** with hearing loss, and the risk of falling increases with the severity of the hearing loss.
- ▶ 90% of people with hearing loss **can improve communication** with a properly fitted hearing aid, counselling or environmental changes.

Chart 1
Hearing loss¹ among adults aged 19 to 79 years, by sex and age group, Canada, 2012 and 2013

percent



^E use with caution (data with a coefficient of variation from 16.6% to 33.3%)

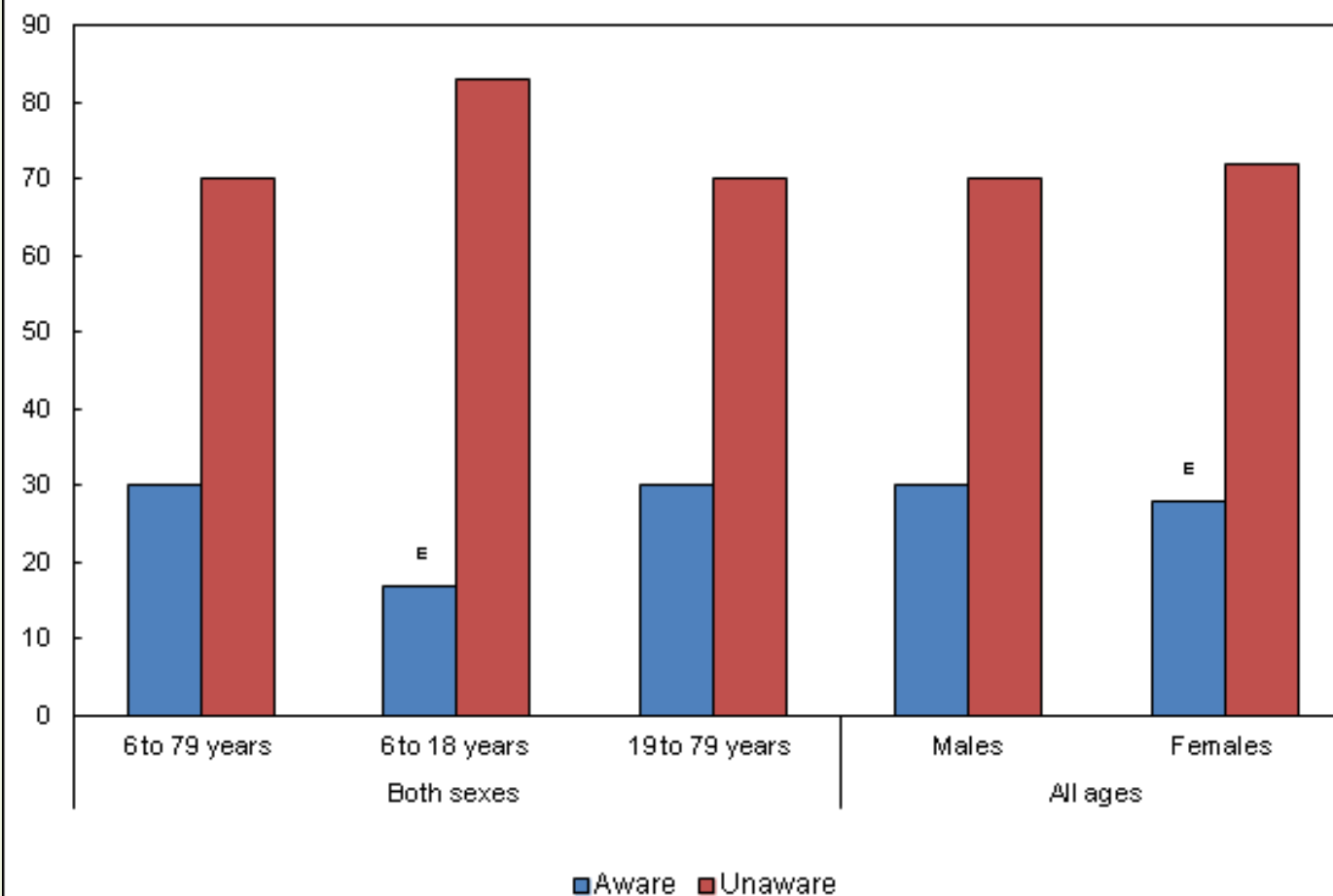
1. Hearing loss is defined as a speech-frequency pure-tone average consistent with at least mild hearing loss (> 25 decibels in adults aged 19 to 79 or > 20 decibels in children and youth aged 6 to 18) in at least one ear.

Source: Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2012 and 2013.

Chart 3

Awareness¹ of hearing loss among those aged 6 to 79 years with measured hearing loss,² by sex and age group, Canada, 2012 and 2013

percent



^E use with caution (data with a coefficient of variation from 16.6% to 33.3%)

1. Awareness of hearing loss was based on whether or not the respondent has ever been diagnosed with a hearing problem by a health professional.

2. Based on audiometric evaluation of the speech frequencies.

Source: Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2012 and 2013.



Hearing and understanding...what is the difference

- ▶ There is quite a difference between hearing and understanding. You may be able to **hear** the sound of a car engine, yet be unable to **understand** or **make out** what the person sitting next to you is saying.
- ▶ Let's take a minute to chat about **high and low frequency** hearing
- ▶ Noises, such as a car engines, vacuum cleaners and airplanes are considered low frequency.
- ▶ Noises such as birds chirping, conversations, refrigerator humming, many telephone ringtones and doorbells are found in the high frequencies
- ▶ Very often hearing loss destroys the ability to perceive high frequencies and makes it **difficult to understand speech**
- ▶ A common type of hearing loss is called " **ski slope**" hearing loss

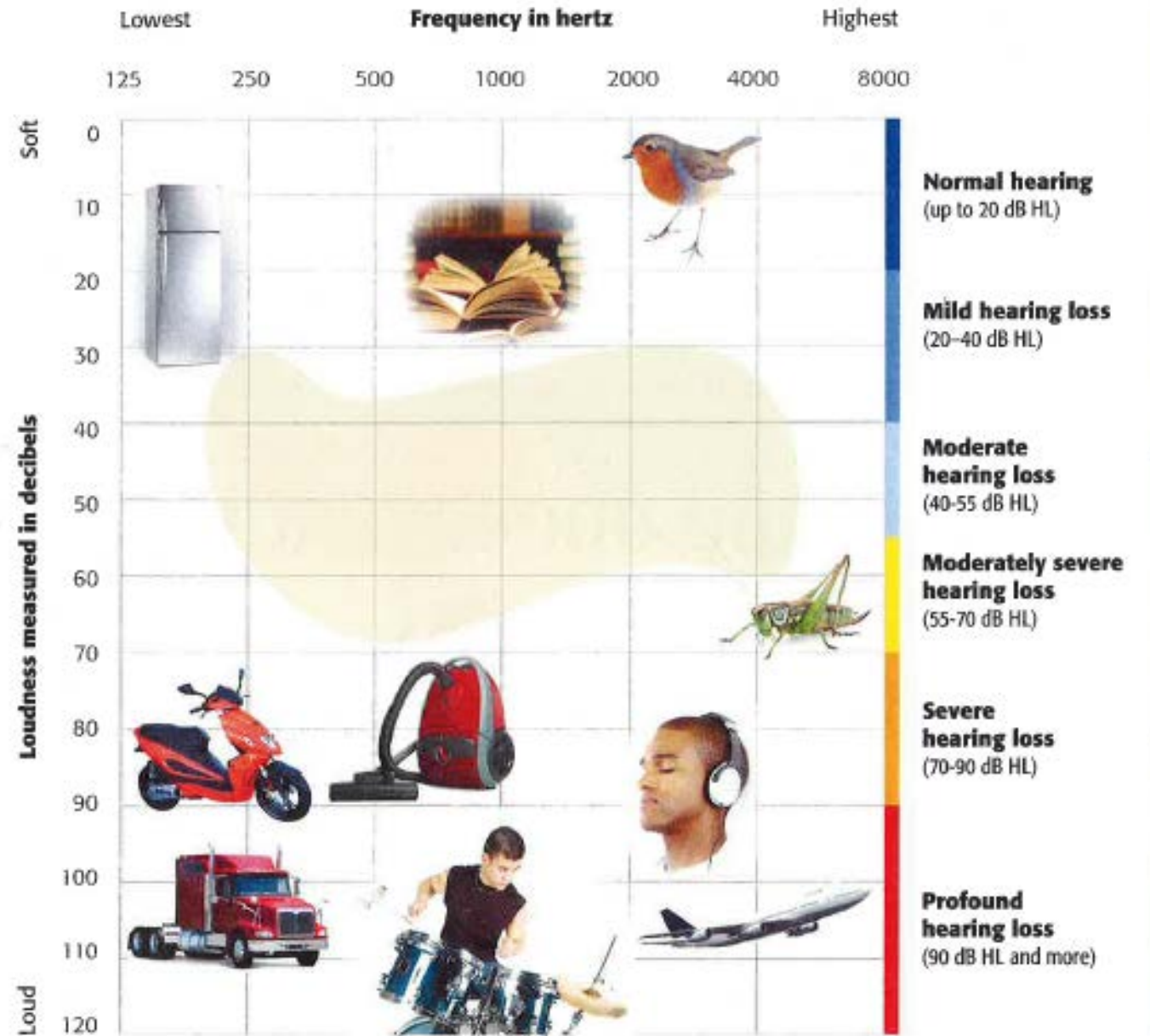
Reference: Lobe Santé Auditive et Communication: Your Hearing Guide

Hearing and understanding...what is the difference

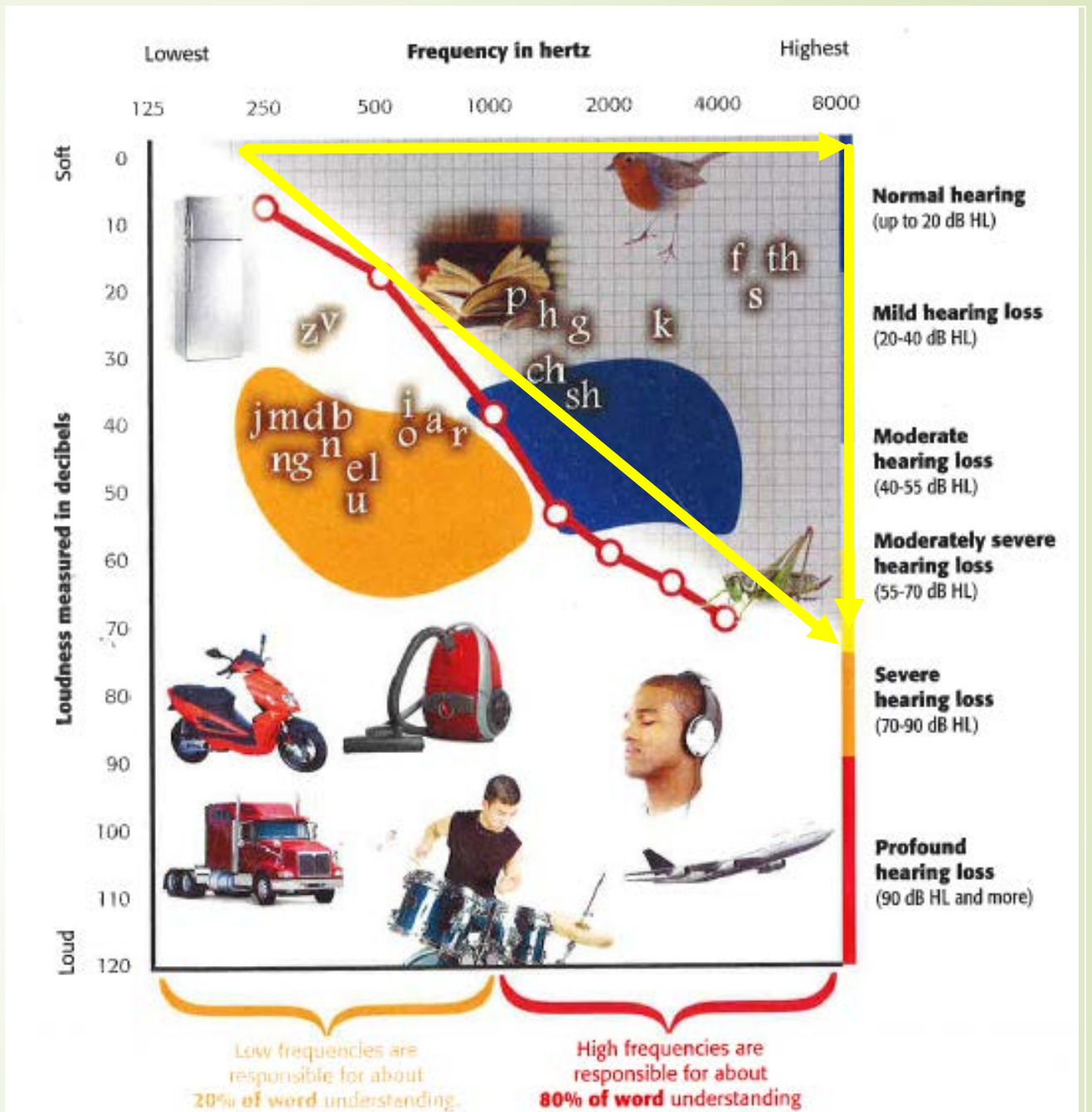
- ▶ People with “ski slope” or any type of hearing loss often need phrases repeated, tend to watch TV at a higher volume & are less inclined to join in group activities, since they find conversation and communication more difficult. With time, they may become increasingly isolated.
- ▶ Let’s take a closer look at situations where your loved one with hearing loss may feel challenged.




Normal Hearing Zone



Audiogram showing ski slope hearing loss





Recognizing hearing loss:

Here are some helpful questions that you can ask yourself or a loved one ... it is a good starting point.



- Do you need to turn the TV up high to understand the **conversations**?
- Do you have trouble following **conversations** in a group or a restaurant?
- Do you have difficulty hearing the music and **understanding** the **lyrics** when you see shows?
- Do you have difficulty **understanding** the **dialogue** at the movies?
- Do you have trouble **understanding** other **people** in the car?
- Do you find it hard to understand the person on the **other end of the telephone**?
- Do you have trouble following conversations at **family gatherings**?
- Do you take part in any social activities (cards, bowling, bingo)? If so, do you have difficulty understanding your teammates, partner, etc.?

I answered “yes” to many of the questions.... now what can I do?

First things first....



- ▶ **Ear wax build up** is a very common cause of hearing loss.. Your physician can easily check this for you & if it is the case, he can remove the wax.
- ▶ If wax build up is not present, you should make an appointment with an **Audiologist** (a health care professional who conducts & analyses hearing tests)
- ▶ If the results of the hearing tests indicate a certain level of hearing loss, you will then be referred to an **Audioprosthetist** who will assist you with hearing aid selection and fitting.



Until then...how can I better communicate with my loved one?

8 tips to improve communication when talking with someone with hearing loss:

1. **Gain attention:** Gain the listener's attention before you begin talking (ex: say his or her name). If necessary, touch the listener's hand or arm, this prepares them to listen.
2. **Maintain eye contact:** face the person with hearing loss. Your facial and body language add important information to the communication
3. **Keep hands away from face:** When talking, try to keep your hands away from your face. If you are a smoker, hold the cigarette in your hands while you are talking.
4. **Avoid changing the shape of your lips & mouth:** Most listeners make use of lip reading. To help with lip-reading, do not overdo or create odd lip shapes, avoid chewing gum and talking with food in your mouth.



Until then...how can I better communicate with my loved one?

(8) Tips to improve communication when talking with someone with hearing loss:

- 5. Speak naturally:** Speak distinctly, but without exaggeration. You do not need to shout. Shouting actually distorts the words. Try not to mumble as this is very hard to understand.
- 6. Rephrase rather than repeat:** If the listener has difficulty understanding what you said, find a different way of saying it. If the listener did not understand the words the first time, it is likely that they will not understand the second time... so try to rephrase it.
- 8. Converse away from background noise:** Try to reduce background noises when conversing. Turn off the radio or television. When going to a restaurant, ask for a table away from the kitchen, server stations or large partners.
- 9. Move to an area with good lighting:** Sit where there is good lighting so the listener can more easily see your face.

Not sure how well you hear?

- ▶ Try this simple on line hearing test... it will give you a fairly good idea

<http://www.hear-it.org/Online-Hearing-Test>



Already have hearing aids?
Perhaps this presentation can help you

Hearing Aids 101

Hearing Aids 101



Seniors Health Promotion Workshop Series



References:

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- <http://www.hear-it.org/ski-slope-hearing-loss-> (accessed 2016 02 06)
- Hearing Loss and Older Adults:
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- <http://www.chs.ca/facts-and-figures> (accessed 2016 02 06)
- <http://www.hearingfoundation.ca/> (accessed 2016 02 12)
- Lobe Santé Auditive et Communication: Your Hearing Guide