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Over 30 million people in the U.S. have diabetes, and an estimated 34.5 million have some type of hearing loss. Could there be a connection? According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) there is. In fact, the NIH has found that hearing loss is twice as common in people with diabetes as it is in those who don't have the disease. Also, of the 79 million adults thought to have pre-diabetes, the rate of hearing loss is 30% higher than in those with normal blood sugar.

What causes or contributes to hearing loss in people with diabetes isn't clear. It's known that high blood sugar can damage blood vessels throughout the body, including your ears. If you've had diabetes for a long time and it isn't well-controlled, there could be damage to the vast network of small blood vessels in your ears. Research suggests that women with diabetes may experience greater hearing loss than those without the disease. This also applies to women with well-controlled diabetes.

Another complication of diabetes is nerve damage. It's possible that damage to the auditory nerves could lead to hearing loss.

More research is needed to fully understand the link between diabetes and hearing loss.

Signs of Hearing Loss

- Frequently asking others to repeat themselves.
- Trouble following conversations that involve more than two people.
- Thinking that others are mumbling.
- Problems hearing in noisy places such as busy restaurants.
- Trouble hearing the voices of women and small children.
- Turning up the TV or radio volume too loud for others who are nearby.

Talk to your primary care doctor. Sometimes the problem is just an earwax build-up and the patient is referred to a doctor to remove the wax. Treatment will depend on the type of hearing loss. The most common type of hearing loss is called "sensorineural hearing loss." This is the kind usually found with diabetes. It cannot usually be cured. However, most cases of sensorineural hearing loss can be treated with hearing aids.

Hearing aids have changed a lot in the past few years. Instead of making all sounds louder, like the old kind, newer hearing aids are better at making what you want to hear clearer. These hearing aids also have special features. They may have automatic volume control and can reduce background noise.

Hearing aids are getting smaller and smaller. It is unlikely anyone will notice when you are wearing them. The truth is, people are more likely to notice your hearing loss. People who don't treat their hearing problems can become depressed and try to avoid their friends. On the other hand, studies show that people who wear hearing aids often have a better social life.

Preventing Hearing Loss

- Control blood sugar. Managing diabetes can be hard work at times, but gaining and maintaining tight blood sugar control could keep your ears sharp longer.
- Don't smoke. Smoking speeds hearing loss on its own, but acts as a risk multiplier when combined with other hearing loss risk factors, such as poorly controlled diabetes, working in an environment full of loud noise, or frequently using firearms (more than once a month for a year).
- Manage loud noise. When researchers look at hearing loss, they consider a noisy work environment to be one in which you have to raise your voice to be heard. This kind of environment increases your risk of hearing loss. If you can't switch tasks or jobs, consider using noise canceling or reducing devices to protect your
- Minimize your exposure to loud noises that are persistent.
- Never listen to music through headphones or ear buds with the volume all the way up.
- Wear ear plugs or protective earmuffs during any activity that exposes you to noise at or

How to Start a Healthy Day



Follow these tips to start your day right! Studies have repeatedly shown the benefits of a healthy breakfast. In fact, a good start can help you manage glucose levels, too! Follow the steps below to take the hassle and headache out of your first meal of the day.

Eating breakfast has shown to help boost metabolism, which means your body does a better job managing your weight. This can be a key factor for some people in managing their diabetes too. But whether you're a student, parent, or working professional, your busy schedule might keep you from eating a balanced breakfast in the mornings.

Make Breakfast While You Sleep

That sounds impossible, doesn't it? Not quite! There are many unique "overnight oatmeal" recipes out there, but all you need to remember is the most basic recipe. Try this: simply mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oats and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low-fat milk (or milk substitute like soy milk) in a container or jar that can be sealed tightly, and leave it in the fridge overnight. That's it! When you wake up your oatmeal is ready for breakfast. You can "dress" up your oatmeal by mixing in a tablespoon of peanut butter for some added protein, or add a bit of vanilla extract and cinnamon for additional flavor.

Double Your Cooking

Choose about one or two recipes that you would eat for breakfast and set aside one day of the week to cook these recipes. To make it easy, select a recipe that yields enough servings so that you can divide and spread it throughout the week. You can also choose a recipe that might yield only one serving and simply double or triple the ingredients. Some great recipes to try out include making smoothies that you can just pour in a glass or in a to-go cup the next morning. You can also try out a savory twist on oatmeal with this Savory Mediterranean Oats or another grab and go recipe like these Mini Veggie Frittatas.



Having one large breakfast meal that can be easily warmed up the next morning, or packed in a container that you can just grab and go on your way out will save you time and ensure you get a healthy start to your day.

Fast Food Options for a Fast Morning

Whether it's a drive-through, or a restaurant that's on your way to work or school, sometimes these places are really your only options in the mornings, and that's okay! Here are some tips on how to make these places like your own kitchen and grab a healthy breakfast:

Request substitutes. Many small restaurants and fast food restaurants are able to swap out ingredients for their customers. For example, ask if you can have a whole wheat bread or English muffin option. This could add about three or more grams of fiber, an important nutrient to help you stay full longer. Instead of a croissant or other pastries, ask for fresh fruit as your side instead.

Take out the extra calories. If you're ordering a breakfast sandwich, ask that it's not prepared with butter. This could lower the sodium by 20 milligrams and the total fat by at least two grams. Look out for other swaps you could make such as choosing Canadian bacon or turkey bacon in place of sausage or regular bacon. This will remove some calories and saturated fat. Skip the cheese and you'll save another 100 calories.

"Build Your Own" options. Some restaurants may have a "build your own" option where you can take control of what goes into your breakfast. If you choose oatmeal, go for the nutrient dense toppings like unsalted nuts which are great for some protein and healthy fats. You can skip the brown sugar, honey, and dried fruit toppings too. Instead, ask for the fresh fruit toppings (especially berries rich in antioxidants and fiber, but low in calories and carbohydrates) if you're looking for a sweeter flavor.



Look for the low calorie drinks. It's not just water! Many cafes or other restaurants with coffee drinks add a lot of extra calories. You can keep your coffee simple, or use skim or low-fat milk instead of creamer. There is also a choice in dairy with lattes and cappuccino's. Switching from whole to low-fat milk takes off about 20 calories. Watch out for added flavorings and see if there is a sugar-free option. You might even want to try out the many different herbal tea flavors that most places have, all of which are zero calories.

You don't need to be in a five star restaurant to request a customized meal. So remember, ask for what you want!