



## Why Wisconsin *IS FOCUSING ON* HEARING HEALTHCARE

BY ELIZABETH LANDE

"Hearing loss can cause breakdowns in communication, leading to stress, isolation, and frustration, which impact various aspects of our lives," says Dr. Sarah Andersen, audiologist with Avada Hearing Care Centers. There are many misconceptions, so we asked Dr. Andersen to share her insights.

### Does hearing loss impact a lot of people?

According to the Hearing Loss Association of America, just under 50 million Americans have some hearing loss. Hearing loss touches

not only the individual who suffers from it, but also their family, friends, and anyone they interact with.

### What are the signs of hearing loss?

- Asking people to repeat themselves.
- Feeling as if people are mumbling.
- Increased difficulties following conversation.
- Challenges when speaking on the telephone.
- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus).
- Increased fatigue after concentrating on listening for

extended periods of time.

- Hearing the words someone says but not understanding them.

In addition, family and friends may notice these signs.

- Television is too loud.
- Individual is speaking louder than they used to.
- Individual is isolating themselves from previously enjoyed activities.
- Individual becomes increasingly frustrated when communicating.

- Individual isn't engaging in conversations where more than one person is speaking.

### How does hearing loss impact someone's life?

Not being able to hear means certain social cues may be missed and, as a result, an individual may retreat from their social life. People with hearing loss may not realize they aren't hearing little things, such as birds singing or the wind in the trees. Often, people with age-related hearing loss lose the ability to hear higher-pitched voices, so they miss getting full conversations.

### How can you help a family member who struggles with hearing?

Encourage a hearing test by an audiologist or hearing care provider. Also, use communication strategies:

- Look at the individual when speaking.
- Slow your rate of speech but don't elongate or overexaggerate words; instead add pauses between each word so that what's being said can be processed.
- Rephrase a sentence rather than simply repeating it multiple times.
- Speak in a well-lit environment so the individual can clearly see your face.

### What can be done to help someone with hearing loss?

In many cases, hearing aids and communication strategies help. Hearing aids can take time to get used to, so be patient with the individual. Communication can be challenging with even mild hearing loss, especially in noisy environments or places where a lot is going on. For important conversations,

find a quiet place where you can both focus on listening.

### How is Avada helping address hearing loss in the community?

Avada is pleased to be part of the Campaign for Better Hearing, which aims to raise awareness of hearing healthcare nationwide. We're providing complimentary hearing assessments for people age 60+. Early detection is key for positive outcomes, so we encourage you to "Test Your Ears at 60 Years."

Avada has participating locations across Wisconsin. For more information, call (888) 208-5148 or visit [campaignforbetterhearing.us](http://campaignforbetterhearing.us).

Photograph provided by Avada.

*Elizabeth Lande writes about audiology, hearing loss, and healthcare for hearing-related organizations. She has also worked in digital marketing and content strategy in various areas, including commercial real estate, higher education, and legal fields. She has a Bachelor of Arts from Smith College and a Master of Arts from the University of Washington in Seattle.*

*Sarah Andersen, AuD, received her bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and her doctorate in audiology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison/Stevens Point consortium. She is originally from Racine and currently lives in central Wisconsin.*



AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION  
[diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION  
(800) 242-8721  
[heart.org](http://heart.org)

AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION (APDA)  
[apdaparkinson.org/community](http://apdaparkinson.org/community)

ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION  
Wisconsin Office  
(414) 321-3933  
[arthritis.org/wisconsin](http://arthritis.org/wisconsin)

**CARE WISCONSIN**  
2321 San Luis Pl., Green Bay 54304  
(800) 963-0035  
[carewisc.org/joa](http://carewisc.org/joa)

Care Wisconsin offers government-funded programs to frail seniors and adults with disabilities. We match members to the healthcare and long-term care supports and services they need.

DIABETIC SUPPORT GROUP  
Aurora Health Care  
(920) 907-7000

FOND DU LAC COUNTY SENIOR SERVICES  
Living Well with Chronic Conditions  
(920) 929-3114

PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP  
Aurora Health Center – Fond du Lac  
(920) 906-4792

**CLINICS & MEDICAL CENTERS - SPECIALTY**

**ADVANCED PAIN MANAGEMENT**

APM Appleton Clinic  
1616 N. Casaloma Dr., Ste. 100  
Appleton 54913