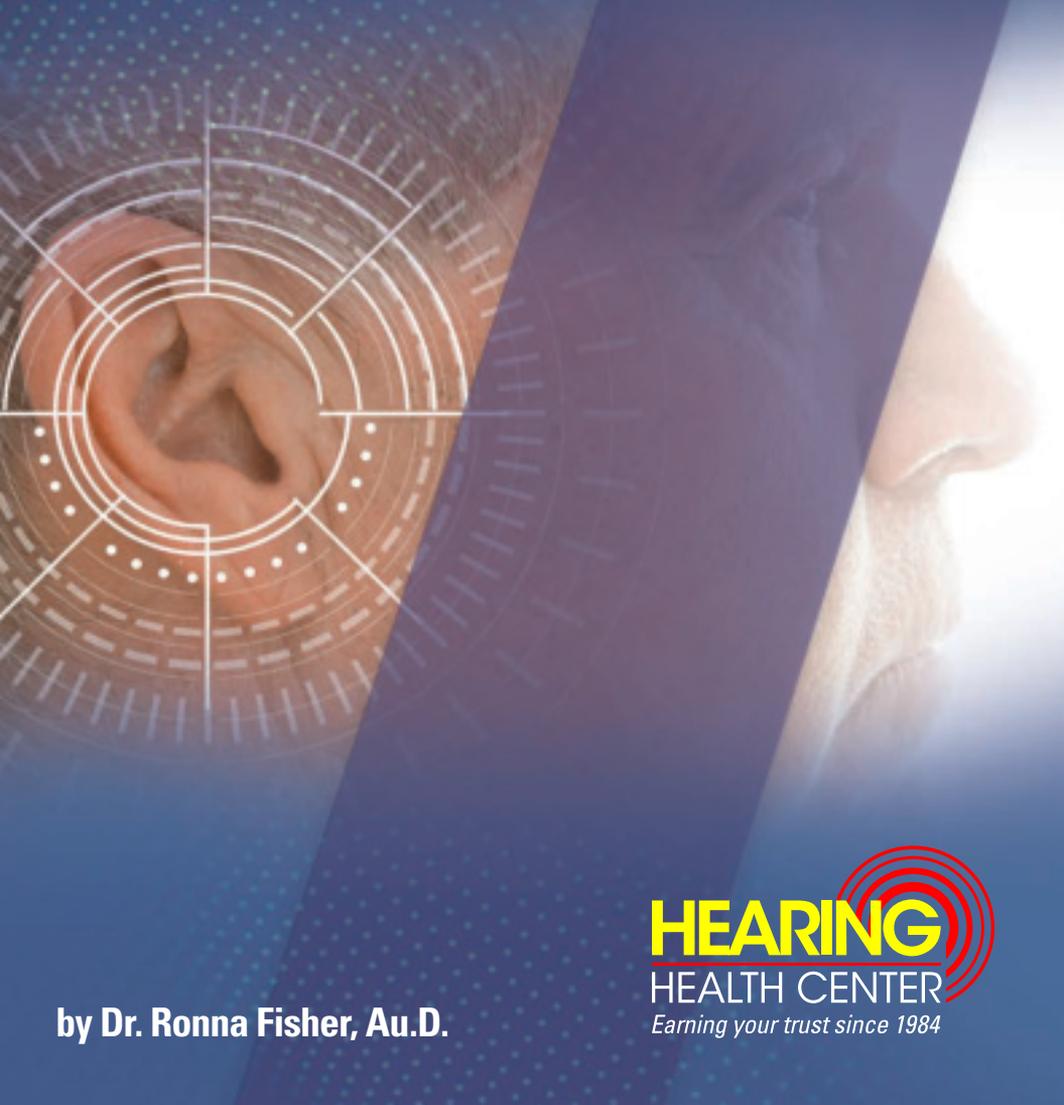


# Hearing's Seven Hidden Risks and what you can do about them... **NOW.**



by Dr. Ronna Fisher, Au.D.

**HEARING**  
HEALTH CENTER  
*Earning your trust since 1984*

# Your Hearing and Your Health

**Remaining healthy has become a focus, even an obsession, with Americans, especially baby boomers.**

**Prevention and early detection** with regular heart, blood pressure, cholesterol, colon, liver, skin and every possible type of screening has become almost mandatory. We want to live longer, remain active, stay engaged, travel and enjoy life as long as possible.

**Yet we totally disregard** our number one form of communication, engagement, and way of maintaining relationships. We ignore our hearing. Doctors rarely screen, or even think to ask about hearing problems. Difficulty hearing and understanding are rarely a problem, or evident, in quiet environments or when communicating face to face. "It's not that bad," is the most frequent comment heard by every audiologist.

**All over the world, the one common element** that brings the most happiness and joy is being with the people you care about and love. All over the world, sharing, laughing, telling stories and relating memories brings the greatest pleasure, warmth, and feelings of love.

**When your ability to hear and understand** the spoken word diminishes, so does your enjoyment of the things you love doing, the people you love being with, and your ability to achieve happiness.

**If that is not enough reason to get a hearing checkup** immediately, the findings of every study in the last fifteen years should motivate you to run to the nearest audiologist.



**Dr. Ronna Fisher, Au.D.**  
Founder and President  
Hearing Health Center, Inc.

**"Blindness cuts us off from *things*, but the loss of the most vital stimulus - the sound of the voice - is much worse.**

**Loss of hearing separates us from *people*."**

*– Helen Keller*

**Learn about the seven serious health risks and what you can do about them...NOW.**

# 1 Cardiovascular Disease

**A study conducted by Harvard University found an overwhelming relation between heart disease and hearing loss.**

“Hearing loss occurred 54% more often in people with heart disease than in the general population.” Heart disease is caused by problems with

blood flow and blood vessels. It often results from plaque build-up on the arteries (atherosclerosis) which makes it difficult for blood to flow through the veins, arteries, vessels and bodily organs, especially the inner ear.

Hearing loss is not the only consequence of inadequate blood flow to the auditory system. Recent research (*Hull RH, Kerschen SR, The influence of cardiovascular health on peripheral and central auditory function in adults: a research review. AmerJournAud 2010;19(1):9-6.*) shows corresponding damage to the brainstem and auditory pathways resulting in difficulties with processing, decoding and understanding speech.

## THE LINK –

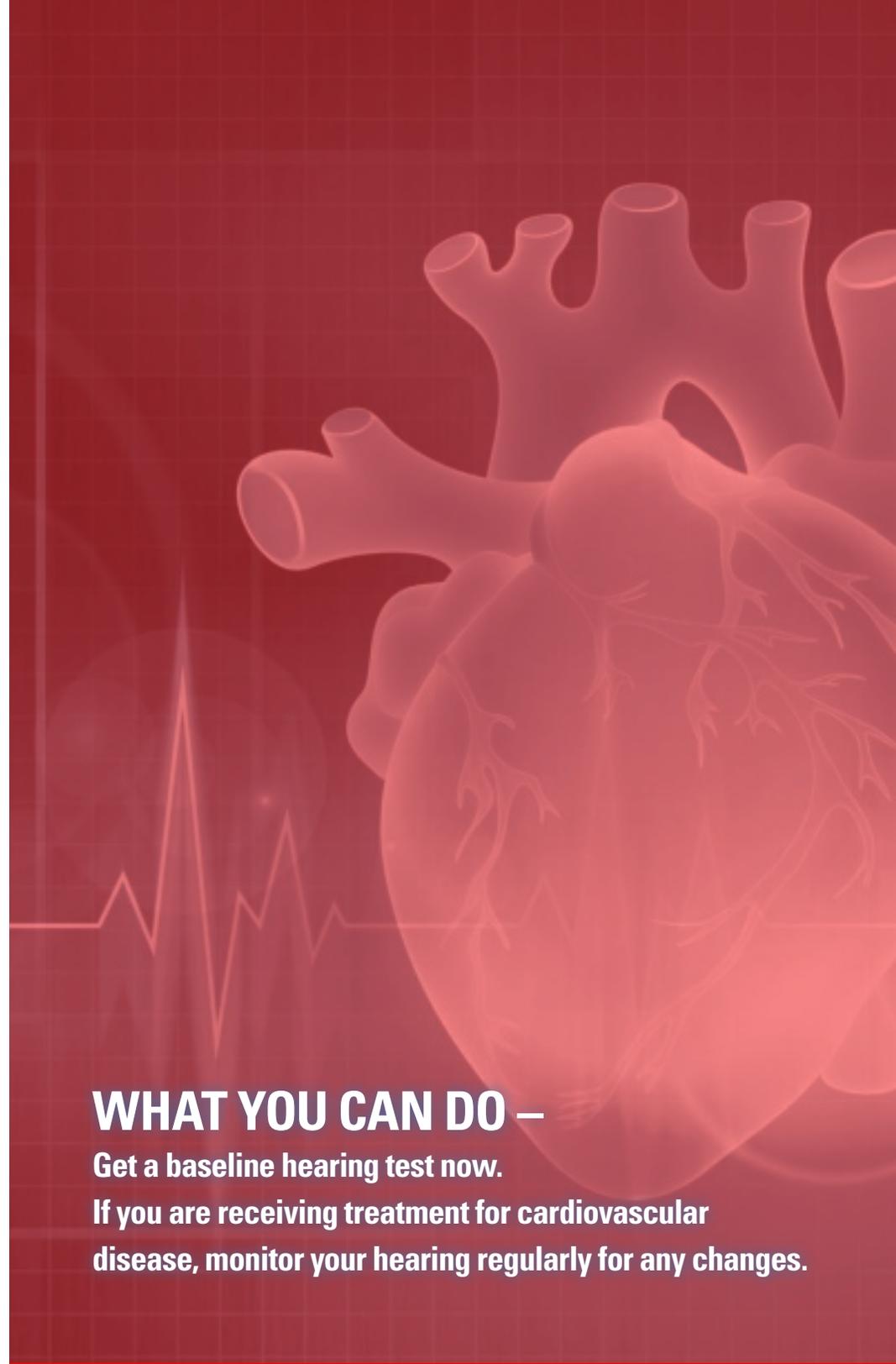
**The inner ear is extremely sensitive to blood flow. Inadequate blood flow and blood vessel trauma damages the nerves of the inner ear. Hearing loss could be an early, in fact the first, warning sign of an impending heart attack or stroke.**

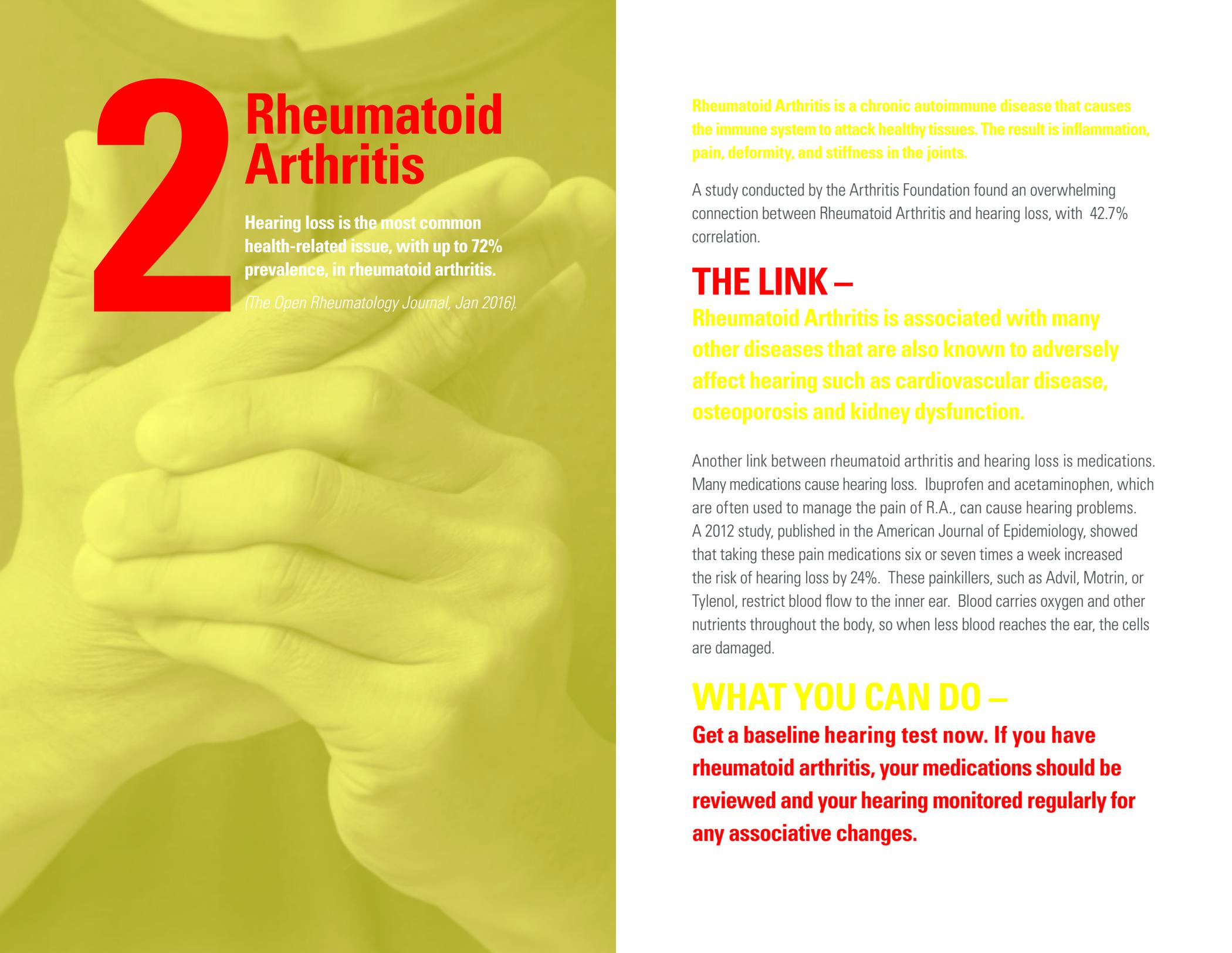
The nerves of the inner ear are so sensitive and fragile that Harvard researchers concluded the ear might be the first organ affected by cardiovascular disease. They stated that if blood flow is inadequate, the nerves of the inner ear are so sensitive that hearing loss could be an early warning sign of impending cardiovascular disease.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO –

**Get a baseline hearing test now.**

**If you are receiving treatment for cardiovascular disease, monitor your hearing regularly for any changes.**





# 2 Rheumatoid Arthritis

Hearing loss is the most common health-related issue, with up to 72% prevalence, in rheumatoid arthritis.

*(The Open Rheumatology Journal, Jan 2016).*

**Rheumatoid Arthritis is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes the immune system to attack healthy tissues. The result is inflammation, pain, deformity, and stiffness in the joints.**

A study conducted by the Arthritis Foundation found an overwhelming connection between Rheumatoid Arthritis and hearing loss, with 42.7% correlation.

## **THE LINK –**

**Rheumatoid Arthritis is associated with many other diseases that are also known to adversely affect hearing such as cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and kidney dysfunction.**

Another link between rheumatoid arthritis and hearing loss is medications. Many medications cause hearing loss. Ibuprofen and acetaminophen, which are often used to manage the pain of R.A., can cause hearing problems. A 2012 study, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, showed that taking these pain medications six or seven times a week increased the risk of hearing loss by 24%. These painkillers, such as Advil, Motrin, or Tylenol, restrict blood flow to the inner ear. Blood carries oxygen and other nutrients throughout the body, so when less blood reaches the ear, the cells are damaged.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO –**

**Get a baseline hearing test now. If you have rheumatoid arthritis, your medications should be reviewed and your hearing monitored regularly for any associative changes.**

# 3 Dementia

**You do not hear with your ears.** Your ears are merely an appendage to collect sound and direct it to your brain where the sound is processed, sorted, filtered and deciphered so you understand it. As hearing diminishes, the brain receives only partial and inadequate information. Processing, sorting, filtering is increasingly more difficult and your ability to understand increasingly reduced.

Individuals with hearing loss show a 40% accelerated rate of cognitive decline (*Frank Lin, MD, Ph.D., Johns Hopkins*) The greater the hearing loss, the greater the likelihood of developing a cognitive disorder and the steeper the decline in mental function. Even those with a very mild hearing loss (even before the hearing loss becomes noticeable), show accelerated rates of gray matter shrinkage in the brain.

Johnathan Pelle, at the University of Pennsylvania, stated, "As hearing ability declines, hearing aids should be seriously considered not only to improve hearing, but to preserve the brain." (*Science Daily*) *The Lancet*, in 2017, published the findings of a study conducted by twenty-four international researchers who identified 9 lifestyle risk factors for dementia. Hearing loss is the highest contributing factor for dementia.

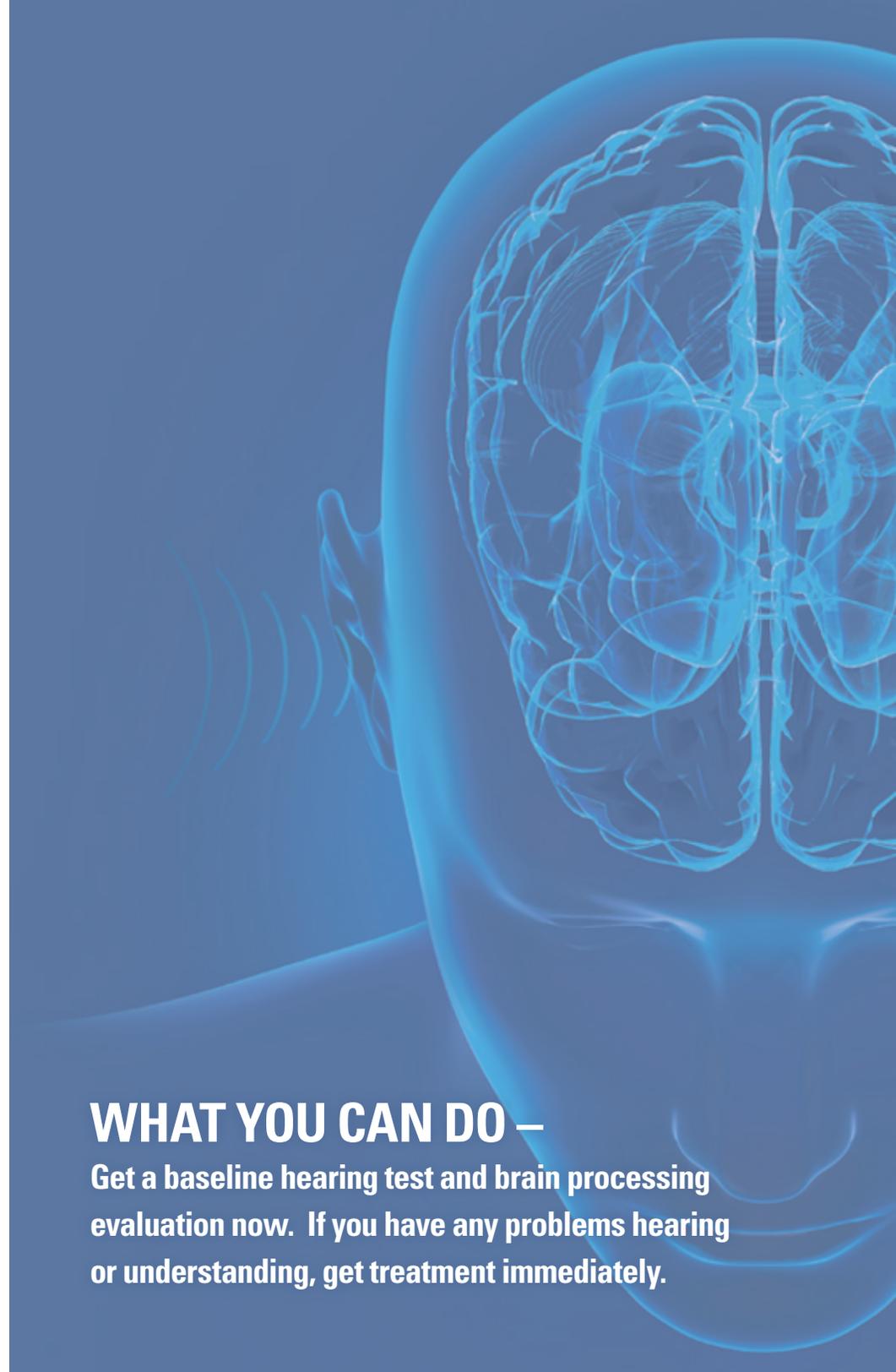
## THE LINK –

**Lack of regular social interaction leads to mental stagnation and deterioration. It takes a great deal of extra effort for those with hearing loss to hear and comprehend.**

This creates a significant strain on the brain (called cognitive overload) and interferes with normal cognitive function. In addition, hearing loss causes individuals to withdraw socially.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO –

**Get a baseline hearing test and brain processing evaluation now. If you have any problems hearing or understanding, get treatment immediately.**



# 4 Depression

**Hearing loss is the most common chronic condition associated with depression in people 60 years and older**

(JAMA Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. 2017), particularly in women. The National Council on Aging found that wearing hearing aids helps prevent depression. Most impressive is the study

published in the Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics showing a marked improvement in emotional, social and cognitive conditions after wearing hearing aids for just 3 months.

## THE LINK –

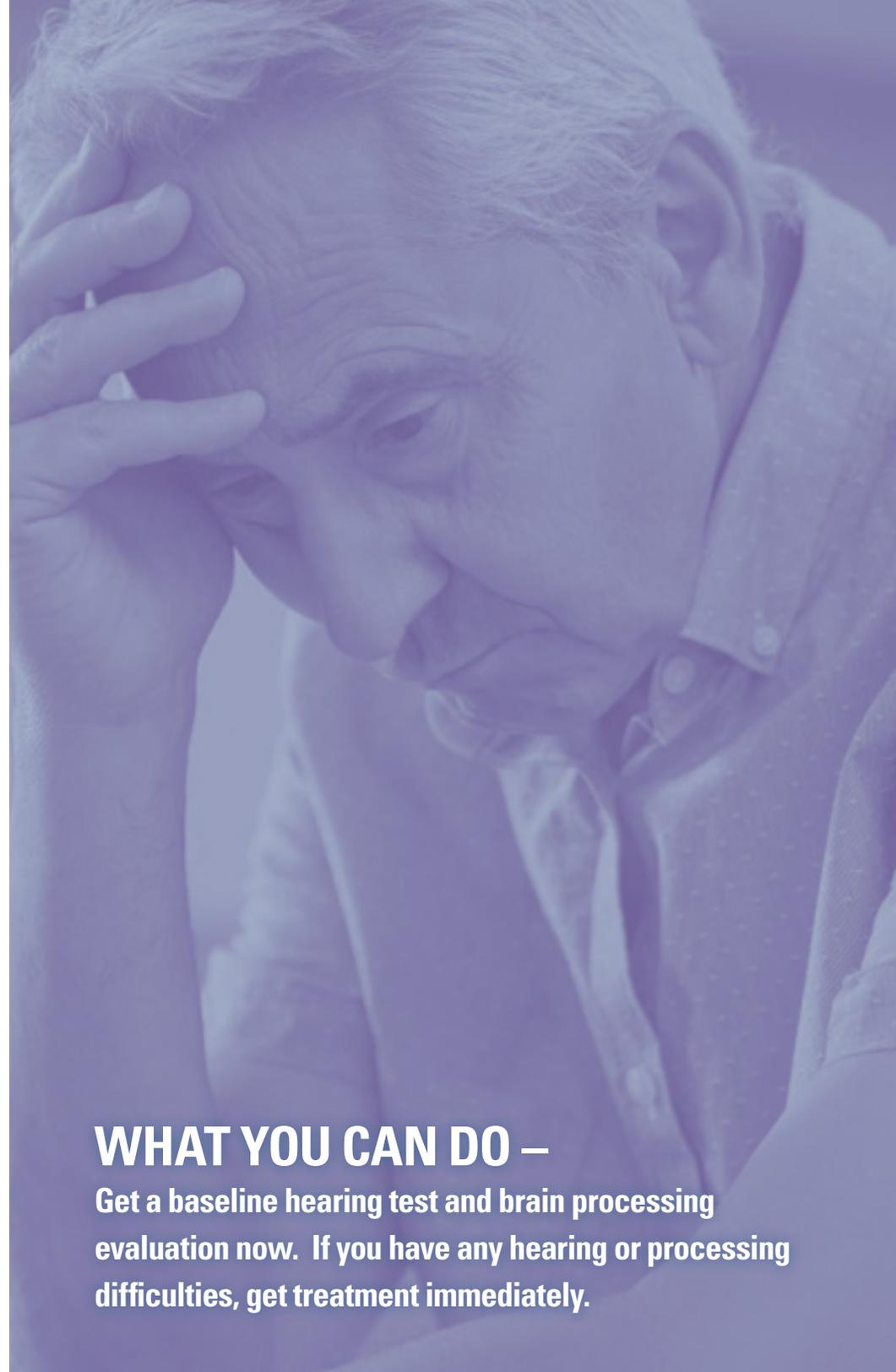
**“Belongingness” is a basic and innate human emotional need.**

According to Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary, all human beings need a certain minimum quantity of regular, satisfying social interactions.

Inability to meet this need results in loneliness and mental distress. The desire to form and maintain social bonds is among the most powerful human motives. Without social bonds, the ability to self-regulate suffers. *(Baumeister, R. F., DeWall, C. N., Ciarocco, N. J., & Twenge, J. M. (2005), Social exclusion impairs self-regulation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88(4), 589.)*

Humans have a profound need to connect with others and gain acceptance into social groups. When relationships deteriorate, or when social bonds are broken, depression sets in. The world over, in every country, culture and religion, people are the most happy when they are with those they care about and love. It is frustrating and depressing to be with those you love and care about and feel left out because you do not understand the conversations and cannot participate in the sharing. According to *Steger, M. F., & Kashdan, T. B. (2009)* people who are depressed often feel unable to satisfy their need for belonging in relationships and therefore have fewer intimate ones. They also induce negative feelings and reactions in others, which consequently elicits rejection.

The effects of rejection are more potent than the effects of acceptance because rejection causes hurt and pain *(Buckley, Winkel and Leary)*



## WHAT YOU CAN DO –

**Get a baseline hearing test and brain processing evaluation now. If you have any hearing or processing difficulties, get treatment immediately.**

# 5 Falls & Balance

**Dizziness and balance problems increase significantly with age.** Over 70% of those over age 65 seek treatment and one third of everyone over 65 will fall. (Center for Disease Control). Falls are the leading cause of death over age 65.

Even a slight decrease in hearing triples the risk of falling. As hearing worsens, the chance of falling increases markedly.

**THE LINK** – A recent study done by Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging found that hearing loss significantly increases the risk of falling. The news could have far reaching implications when it comes to preventing falls and maintaining independent lives.

There are several reasons why a decrease in hearing increases balance problems and the risk of falling. Hearing loss decreases awareness of people, pets, or other sounds in the environment. Spatial awareness, i.e. where the body is positioned in relation to other people and objects around it, is crucial for maintaining gait and balance. In addition, many researchers point to cognitive overload as a hindrance to balance; simply put, this means that those with hearing loss are using more of their mental resources to hear and interpret speech and other sounds. Since mental resources aren't a bottomless well, that means the brain has fewer resources with which to maintain balance.

Research as to whether hearing aids helped maintain balance were definitely conclusive. The results were overwhelmingly YES. Sound information alone, coming through the hearing aids, plays a large role in maintaining balance.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO –

# 6

## Medications

According to the Government Accountability Office, only 1 to 10% of all adverse side effects are actually reported to the FDA.

### **In a case of notable regulatory short-sightedness,**

drug companies are only required to report adverse effects they deem “statistically significant.” Many medications cause hearing loss, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), cognitive disorders and memory loss. These adverse reactions are not listed in the manufacturer’s “warnings of adverse side effects.”

### **THE LINK –**

**It is well known that drugs and treatment that save the lives of patients with cancer cause permanent and irreversible hearing loss.**

It is also known that many antibiotics and pain relieving, anti-inflammatory drugs (aspirin, Motrin, NSAIDs) damage the auditory system. It is less well known, and rarely acknowledged, that drugs such as Viagra and other erectile dysfunction drugs directly affect hearing.

In addition, diuretics used to treat high blood pressure and heart failure, statin medications to lower cholesterol and even many over-the-counter and herbal medications can cause hearing loss, balance disorders and severe tinnitus.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO –**

**Get a baseline hearing test now. Bring a list of all of the medications you take. If any are associated with hearing, balance, tinnitus or dizziness, your audiologist will contact your doctor to discuss alternative medications that are not ototoxic.**

# 7 Life Threatening

Hospitals and doctors' offices nationwide might have avoided nearly 2,000 patient deaths and thousands more emergency room visits if medical staff and patients communicated better.

Those with hearing loss misunderstand over 50% of instructions given by physicians and health providers.

According to a recent report published in the journal *JAMA*, there is a significant breakdown in communication

with patients over 60. Patients describe not understanding therapeutic instructions, medication dosages, or side effects.

## THE LINK –

In hospitals and many medical care settings there is often competing noise in the background.

Patients are often nervous and already stressed about their medical condition and the content is often technical and unfamiliar. Those with hearing loss rely on lip-reading, facial expressions and visual cues when communicating. Hospitals and physician offices now require electronic medical records. Doctors and medical staff spend the majority of time typing notes into a computer thereby eliminating face-to-face communication.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO –

**Get a hearing test now. If your hearing is even slightly diminished, get treatment immediately to improve your clarity and ability to understand and communicate.**

**Ask for as many repetitions as you need. Request written instructions. Ask your doctors and medical care providers to stop typing and look at you when they speak. Your health and your life are at stake.**

**Protect yourself by being your own advocate.**

**Your hearing, processing, clarity, and ability to understand speech are vital to your happiness, your relationships, and your enjoyment of life.**

Your hearing ability and your hearing health are a direct link to your overall health and wellness.

**Do not wait until you have a problem.**

By the time you realize you have a problem with your hearing, irreversible damage to your brain has already occurred and may be too late to reverse or repair.

**Get your hearing checked...  
NOW.**

# Five Locations to Serve You

## **Downtown Chicago**

Magnificent Mile  
142 E. Ontario Street, #1100  
**(312) 263-7171**

## **Naperville**

Fox Run Square, #103  
1212 S. Naper Boulevard  
**(630) 369-8878**

## **Oak Brook**

Oakbrook Center Professional Bldg.  
120 Oakbrook Center, #709  
**(630) 571-7111**

## **Highland Park**

Crossroads Shopping Center  
185 Skokie Valley Road  
**(847) 681-7000**

## **Park Ridge/Norwood Park**

Presence Resurrection Medical Center  
7447 W. Talcott Avenue, #360  
**(773) 466-8878**

## Credentials and Affiliations

- American Academy of Audiology
- American Speech/Language and Hearing Association
- Academy of Dispensing Audiologists
- American Tinnitus Association

Approved providers for Medicare, ORS, and DSCC.  
Most insurance plans accepted.



**HearingHealthCenter.com**

The sounds of life and the words of those you love are too precious to miss. The Fisher Foundation for Hearing Health, affiliated with Hearing Health Center, is dedicated to providing hearing aids and services to the financially disadvantaged. [Learn more at FisherFoundationforHearing.org](http://LearnMoreatFisherFoundationforHearing.org)

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