



Making Hearing Health a Family Affair.

By Diane Nens, Audiologist and Senior Clinical Director, UnitedHealthcare Hearing.

When it comes to motivating the [millions of Americans with untreated hearing loss](#) to seek care, family members may express frustration when loved ones don't use hearing aids, sometimes asking hearing health professionals to "convince" the person to wear them. This scenario may apply to motivating people with suspected hearing loss to obtain testing and, if needed, treatment, as well as encouraging individuals to wear the devices once they have them.

If family members and hearing health providers try too hard, they may be viewed as overly aggressive. Distrust may develop and the person with hearing loss may further resist treatment. If family members and health care providers don't push strongly enough, the person with hearing loss may justify declining or delaying treatment. In fact, people who may have [hearing loss wait an average of seven years before obtaining treatment](#).

Hearing affects everyone.

While people with hearing loss are at greater risk of [depression](#), [dementia](#) and [increased risk of falls](#), sub-optimal hearing is also a family issue. Everyone who communicates with a person with hearing loss may be affected, sometimes needing to repeat conversations, speak more slowly or clearly, or use other tactics to improve communication.

For people with hearing loss, social situations may be frustrating, in some cases causing them to stop attending family gatherings, worship services, and other events that involve talking with people. Spouses are commonly affected too, skipping events themselves or developing a sense they are deserting their loved one if they attend gatherings solo.



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What you can do for your family.

It is helpful for family members and caregivers to communicate to the person with hearing loss the challenges the condition is creating. One strategy is to write a handwritten letter describing how the person's hearing loss is adversely affecting friends and family members. It is best to avoid using texts and other forms of electronic communication, considering the delicate nature of the subject

If people continue to struggle to communicate even after obtaining hearing aids, there could be several reasons. It's possible the hearing aids need to be adjusted; the person's hearing loss has further declined and the current devices are no longer strong enough; or the hearing loss is so severe that hearing aids are no longer helpful.

When your family member won't listen.

If you have a family member who resists acknowledging a hearing problem, consider a gentle approach. Let the person know the condition is affecting friends and family members too. The person may hear your message and take action to obtain treatment.



A quick, simple hearing test.

An online hearing test can tell you how well you or your family member are hearing and whether you should schedule an in-person hearing test with a local hearing provider. To take the test right from the comfort of home, just visit UHChearing.com/test.

Questions?

Call UnitedHealthcare Hearing at **1-855-523-9355, TTY 711**, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. CT.

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