

# Sight and Hearing Loss (Sensory Impairments)

## About Sight and Hearing Loss



### Sight loss

Sight loss means having problems with your eyes which makes it hard to see.



Lots of people have problems with their eye sight.



For many people these problems can be put right by doing things like wearing glasses.



But for some people their sight loss can't be treated. They are known as:

- **Sight impaired** (sometimes called visually impaired).
- **Severely sight impaired** (sometimes called blind).



### Hearing loss

Hearing loss means finding it hard to hear or not being able to hear at all.



Hearing loss can happen suddenly.



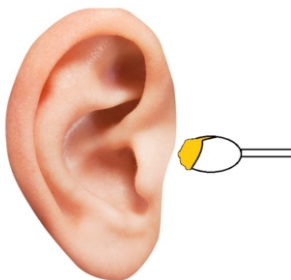
Or your hearing may slowly get worse over time.



Hearing loss can happen for a short amount of time.



Or it might last for the rest of your life.

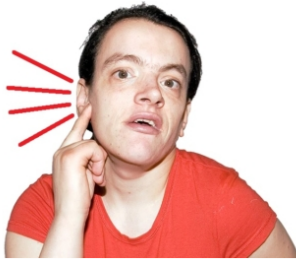


Hearing loss can be caused by different things like:

- Earwax.



- An ear infection.



- A burst ear drum – a hole in the eardrum.



- Meniere's disease – this causes you to feel dizzy and hear a ringing noise.



- Damage from very loud noise.



- Something inside the ear like fluid.



- Getting older.



There are lots of different treatments for hearing loss.

## What Are The Symptoms Of Sight And Hearing Loss?

### Sight Loss



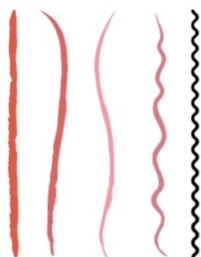
Some signs of sight loss are:



- Colours not looking very bright.



- Finding it hard to know how big a step you need to take when you climb stairs, or when you step down from the edge of the pavement.



- Straight lines looking wobbly.



- Finding it hard to see words in books or papers.



- If you drive, finding it hard to drive at night.



If you have any of these signs you should see an optometrist.



An optometrist is someone who is an expert in looking after your eyes.



They might also send you to a low-vision clinic.



You should have a check up with an optometrist every 2 years to help spot sight loss.



Many people can get a free check-up.



## Hearing loss

Some signs of hearing loss are:

- Not being able to hear other people clearly.



- Having to have music or the tv on very loudly.



- Feeling tired when you talk to people because you have to work hard to hear.



- Earache.



- Noises in your ears like ringing or buzzing.





- Feeling like you are spinning.



If you suddenly lose your hearing in one or both of your ears, see your doctor as soon as possible or call NHS 111.



If you notice any problems with your hearing, see your GP (doctor). They will look inside your ears with a small torch. They will do some simple checks.



They might ask you to go and see a specialist for more tests.

## Treatment And Care For Sight and Hearing Loss



### Sight Loss

Some sight loss can be treated by:



- Wearing glasses or contact lenses.



- Having medicine.



- Having an eye operation.



If your sight loss can't be treated, an eye doctor will do some tests to find out how much of your sight you have lost.



Finding out that you have sight loss that can't be treated can be very upsetting.



You might feel shocked, angry and confused.



You can get lots of help and support to help you live with your sight loss.



- If your sight loss is bad enough you can choose to be **registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired**.





This means that you will be able to get help and support from your local council.



You can also get help with money.



You will need a certificate from your eye specialist.



Your local council will then visit you to see what help and support you need.



- You can contact the **RNIB charity** for information and advice. Call 0303 123 9999 or email [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)



- You could **join a local support group** – you can search for groups near you on the visionary website



- You can get **things that will help you to stay living in your own home** such as:



A telephone with big buttons.



A computer with big buttons and special software that can help you to see the screen and hear information.



An alarm you can wear with a small button you can press if you need help.



Bright lighting.

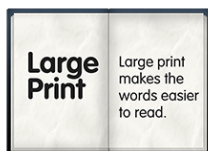


- Some people learn **braille** – this is a way of reading and writing using tiny raised dots you can feel.



- Other ways to **get help with reading and writing** are things like:

A 'magnifying device' that can make words bigger.



Books that come in large print.



Services that read out books or newspapers for you through the internet or on a CD.



- To **get around by yourself** you could:

Use a long cane to help you check for anything in your way – you can go on a training course to learn how to use this.



Apply to have a guide dog – visit the guide dogs website.



Get an app on your smartphone to give you directions to where you want to go.



- If you **work or want to work** you can:

Contact the Access to Work scheme – this can help to pay for special equipment to help you to do your job.



Get help to find a job from the RNIB charity.



## Hearing loss

Some hearing loss only happens for a short amount of time. It sometimes gets better on its own, or can be treated easily.



This could be with:

- Medicine.



- A simple treatment like drops that go in your ear to soften earwax.



But other hearing loss lasts for the rest of your life.



There are things that can help you live with your hearing loss.



These include:

- **Hearing aids:**

These are small electronic devices worn in your ear.

They make sounds louder and clearer.

There are many different types of hearing aid.

The most common type goes around the top and back of the ear. You can get these free.



- **Hearing implants:** these are small electronic devices that are attached to the inside or outside of your head. You would need an operation to attach them.

They can turn sounds into electrical signals that are sent to your brain to help you hear a bit better.

There are some different types of hearing implants.



- **Assistive listening devices (ALDs):** these are other electronic devices that can help you to hear better, like a hearing loop you can wear around your neck.



- **Lip reading:** this is where you learn to watch a person's mouth move while they are speaking to see what words they are saying.



- **Sign language:**

Using signs with your hands, face and body instead of talking.