

Presbycusis: The Trouble with Treble

By far the most common hearing loss is called Presbycusis. It sounds a bit like “Presbyterian,” doesn’t it? Presbyterian means “church of the elders.” “Presby” is Greek for the word “elders.”

At about age 40, one has difficulty seeing close up. This is called Presbyopia, which means “vision of the elders.”

Presbycusis means “hearing of the elders.” At around 65 years of age, many people say they can hear, but just have trouble with clarity of speech.

The complaint will be “People are mumbling. I can hear, but just cannot always understand what’s being said.”

Conversations one on one, and in quiet, won’t be too difficult. Hearing problems will occur however, when someone is speaking from another room, or when the face of the talker cannot be seen, or when there is competing background noise.

Why is this? With Presbycusis, hearing for low-pitched (bass) sounds is typically better than hearing for high-pitched (treble) sounds. The degree or amount of treble hearing loss does not have to be very much to cause difficulty. In fact, the treble hearing loss is usually moderate in degree. Treble hearing loss causes difficulty distinguishing words that sound alike.

People with Presbycusis have difficulty hearing high-pitched treble speech sounds and so they have trouble hearing which words were said. They’ll rely on their eyes and on the context surrounding the words in question, to help along in conversation. This can be rather tiring.

Is it any wonder that they feel out of it, and want to simply be left alone? This is not living the quality of life that they deserve.

We should do something about it. The good thing here is that with good, treble-emphasis hearing aids, we can!



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