

## WORLD HEARING DAY 2019: BEING SOCIAL IS HARD IF YOU DON'T HEAR WELL

WORLD HEARING DAY 2019 FOCUSES ON HOW HEARING PROBLEMS, WHICH AFFECT 466 MILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE, CAN COMPROMISE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND RELATIONS WITH OTHERS.

A NEW ITALIAN STUDY HAS DEMONSTRATED HOW HEARING LOSS CAN BE ASSOCIATED WITH METABOLIC BRAIN DAMAGES AND THUS IMPACT THE ABILITIES TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF WORDS AND TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS.

ITALIAN EXPERTS LAUNCH THE “PROTECT HEARING, COMMUNICATE BETTER” VADEMECUM: 8 TIPS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEARING AND MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE SOCIAL LIFE.

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*Milan, 25 February* - A person with hearing loss communicating with others can be compared to a short-sighted person reading without glasses: an impossible feat. World Hearing Day 2019, to be celebrated worldwide on Sunday, March the 3<sup>rd</sup>, will focus on the close link between hearing and social relations. It will stress the need to periodically check hearing abilities in order to maintain an active social life. This is an important current theme considering that, in the next 30 years, people with hearing loss will double: it is estimated that by 2050, over 900 million people will have hearing loss, compared to the 466 million people today.

The importance of hearing in interpersonal communication is also confirmed by a recent Italian study published in “*Human Brain Mapping*”: **hearing loss, even if not severe, is associated with reduced brain metabolism precisely where auditory perception arises**<sup>1</sup>. This means that a hearing impairment not only makes it difficult to “grasp” the words said by others, but also to understand their meaning. This can have a huge impact at a **social and an emotional level**. **More than 8 out of 10 people** believe that **hearing loss** has a negative effect on their **quality of life**<sup>2</sup>; likewise, untreated hearing impairment increases the risk of **dementia (+21%)** and, in men, of **depression (+43%)**<sup>3</sup>.

On the occasion of **World Hearing Day**, experts launch the “**Protect hearing, communicate better**”, vademecum, promoted by **Amplifon**. It includes advices on how to protect hearing and maintain an active social life.

**The Italian confirmation.** When we communicate with others, **our ears and brain actively cooperate**: the sound of words is “**heard**” in the **auditory cortex** and “**understood**” from semantic and cognitive viewpoints in **other areas of the brain**. A recent Italian study confirms the close link between hearing and the brain. Using brain imaging techniques, the research has demonstrated that **hearing problems** create **metabolic damages** to the central auditory pathways located in the brain due to a reduction in blood

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<sup>1</sup> Cortical pattern of reduced perfusion in hearing loss revealed by ASL-MRI, Ponticorvo et al., Hum Brain Mapp. 2019;1–13, January 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Quality-of-Life Changes and Hearing Impairment: A Randomized Trial, Cynthia D Mulrow et al., Annals of internal medicine 113(3):188-94.

<sup>3</sup> Death, Depression, Disability and Dementia Associated with Self-Reported Hearing Loss Problems: A 25-Year Study, Hélène Amieva et al., The Journals of Gerontology, Series A, January 2018.

supply. This results in **neural networks alterations**, which in turn can lead to difficulties in understanding the meaning of words and may place people at risk of developing diseases such as dementia and Alzheimer's. *“Scientific studies do not leave much room for doubt: we do not only hear with our ears, but also with our brains through the central auditory pathways located in the temporal lobe. These are brain areas that have an impact on both the quantitative aspects of hearing and the qualitative aspects of speech understanding. This means - comments Ettore Cassandro, Full Professor of Otorhinolaryngology and Director of the Head-Neck Department at the University of Salerno, Past President of the Italian Society of Otolaryngology and head and neck surgery - that hearing loss may result in difficulties in communicating with others, problems that may in turn cause the onset of depression or, in more extreme cases, neurological disorders such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease”*. It is thus not surprising that **more than 8 out of 10 individuals** admit that **their hearing loss has negative effects on their quality of life**<sup>2</sup> and that untreated hearing loss increases the likelihood of **dementia (+ 21%)** and, in men, **depression (+ 43%)**<sup>3</sup>.

**Protect your hearing to communicate better.** If science confirms the importance of taking care of hearing to communicate effectively with others, to remain active and to prevent certain diseases, the figures show that there is still **much to be done to stop the rise of hearing problems**. It's estimated that by **2050 over 900 million** people will have hearing loss compared to the **current 466 million**. *“Today we are exposed to many situations that can put our hearing at risk. To prevent the occurrence of a problem - commented Professor Cassandro - it is advisable to take simple precautions such as using earphones for a short period only, keeping at a safe distance from noise sources such as loudspeakers, and periodically checking hearing. In the event of a decrease in hearing abilities proved by a professional test, it is crucial to undergo a rehabilitation process led by the ENT and the audiologist, customised on the causes and evolution of the deficit, exploiting when necessary the potential of new-generation hearing devices. In addition to being almost invisible, these devices take advantage of the latest technologies to allow both quantitative and qualitative hearing recovery, while also guaranteeing high performance”*.

### **“PROTECT HEARING, COMMUNICATE BETTER” VADEMECUM**

Written with the scientific contribution of Professor Ettore Cassandro of the University of Salerno and promoted by Amplifon.

**8 tips to take care of hearing to communicate effectively with others and to have an active social life.**

1. Have periodic hearing checks after 30 years of age, especially if there is a family history of hearing loss or frequent inflammation (otitis);
2. Keep the volume of MP3s and smartphones at a safe noise level that allows to hear surrounding sounds;
3. Use headphones and earphones for a short period only;
4. Check medication leaflets to ensure that drugs have not ototoxic effects;
5. Maintain a safe distance from sources of noise such as stereo speakers and loudspeakers;
6. Wear hearing protection especially in noisy environments such as stadiums and concerts;
7. Have hearing checks also in case of tinnitus (ringing in the ear) or vertigo.
8. In case of hearing loss, undergo a continuative hearing rehabilitation process which involves the use of new-generation hearing devices (avoiding amplifiers) and the active cooperation with an audiologist and a hearing aid specialist.

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## About Amplifon

Amplifon, a global leader in the hearing aid retail market, helps people rediscover all the emotions of sound. Amplifon's approximately 16,000 employees and collaborators worldwide are committed every day to understanding the unique needs of each customer, delivering exclusive, innovative and highly personalised products and services, to ensure that each customer gets the very best solution and an outstanding experience. The Group operates through a network of approximately 11,000 outlets in 29 countries and 5 continents. More information on the Group is available at: [ww.amplifon.com/corporate](http://ww.amplifon.com/corporate).

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