

Hearing aids don't improve memory, but they can reduce the risk of dementia.

Hearing aids do not improve cognitive scores but are associated with a reduced risk of dementia in older adults.

A new study shows that **hearing aids do not improve scores on memory and thinking tests** in older adults with hearing loss; however, **those who use hearing aids have a significantly lower risk of developing dementia** .

These findings suggest that hearing aids **may help protect the brain in ways that standard cognitive tests haven't fully measured** . The study was published in *Neurology* , the medical journal of **the American Neurological Association** .

Hearing aids and brain health during aging



According to recently published research, in people with **moderate hearing loss** , being **prescribed a hearing aid by a doctor did not lead to measurable improvements** in standard memory and thinking tests.

However, the research team found that **the use of hearing aids was associated with a reduced risk of developing dementia** .

Dr. **Joanne Ryan** , lead author of the study from **Monash University (Melbourne, Australia)**, said:

Hearing loss becomes increasingly common as we age, and previous studies have shown that it may increase the risk of memory and thinking problems, including dementia. However, there is still limited information on how hearing loss treatment with hearing aids affects brain health.

She said the study tracked people with hearing loss, **some of whom were prescribed hearing aids and some were not** , and the results showed that **the cognitive scores of the two groups were similar** . However, **the risk of dementia was lower** in the group prescribed hearing aids.

The research participants

The study followed **2,777 adults in Australia** , with:

1. The average age is around **75**.
2. **No dementia was present** at the start of the study.
3. All of them **self-reported moderate hearing loss**.
4. **Never used a hearing aid before**.

During the research process:

1. **664 people** were prescribed hearing aids by their doctors.
2. These people were asked about **the frequency of their device use**.

Tracking cognitive health over 7 years

Participants were followed for **7 years** , and each year they underwent cognitive assessment tests, including:

1. Memory
2. Language ability
3. Mental information processing speed

Throughout the study period:

1. **117 people** developed **dementia**.

When comparing the two groups:

1. **The average scores on memory and reasoning tests remained similar**.
2. The use of hearing aids **is not associated with higher cognitive scores**.

The risk of dementia is lower in people who are prescribed hearing aids.



When researchers focused on analyzing **the risk of dementia** , they discovered another trend.

After adjusting factors such as:

1. Year old
2. Sex
3. Underlying conditions such as **diabetes** and **cardiovascular disease**

The results show that:

1. **5%** of people prescribed hearing aids developed dementia during the study period.
2. Meanwhile, **8%** of people who are not prescribed hearing aids suffer from dementia.

This difference corresponds to a **33% reduction in the risk of dementia** in the group prescribed hearing aids.

Ms. Ryan stated that this result was unexpected , and explained:

1. 'One possible factor is that the majority of study participants had good cognitive health from the start, which reduced their likelihood of seeing improvement with the use of hearing aids.'

Cognitive decline and the use of hearing aids

The research team also assessed **cognitive decline** , including:

1. Cognitive decline in general
2. Dementia

After adjusting the statistics:

1. **36%** of people prescribed hearing aids develop cognitive decline.
2. **42%** of people who are not prescribed hearing aids experience this condition.

This is equivalent to a **15% reduction in the risk of cognitive decline** .

The analysis also showed that **more frequent use of hearing aids was associated with a gradually reduced risk of dementia over time** .

Significance of the findings

Ms. Ryan stated:

"Although we didn't see a difference in cognitive scores, the study suggests that the use of hearing aids in older adults with hearing loss may reduce the risk of dementia and cognitive decline, thereby benefiting brain health."

The research team emphasized that **these results show an association** , but **do not prove that hearing aids directly prevent dementia** .

One limitation of the study is that **the majority of participants were relatively healthy and had good cognitive abilities** at the start. Therefore, the results **may not apply to those who are in poorer health or who have had memory problems** .

This research was funded by:

1. **The National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the United States**
2. **The National Institute on Aging, USA**
3. **Australian Government**
4. **Monash University**

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