

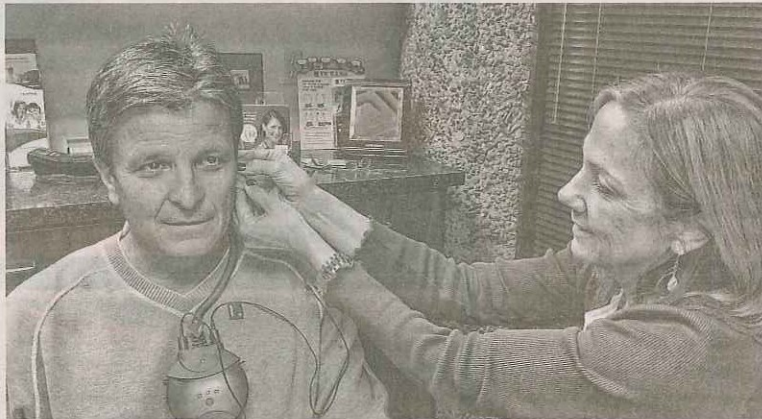
# Say what? Many older adults unaware they have hearing loss

**W**e go through a lot of changes as we age. We eat right to keep our cholesterol down, get glasses when our eyesight starts to go and exercise regularly to lower blood pressure. Whether there are small changes happening that we can notice ourselves or something your doctor regularly monitors, we learn to take better care of our bodies as we age.

So, it may be surprising to learn that millions of people are living with hearing loss and may not be doing anything about it. Many are living with deteriorating hearing and don't even know it.

Hearing loss can be tricky to identify, because not all sounds register the same way in the ear. Some sounds may be perfectly clear while others distorted. Some major indicators that you may be losing your hearing include:

- » Frequently ask people to repeat themselves;
- » Often turn your ear toward a sound to hear it better;
- » Lose your place in group conversations;
- » Keep the volume on your radio or



**Audiologist Georgine Ray fits patient Randy Bridges with his hearing aids.**

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TV at a level that others say is too loud;  
» Have pain or ringing in your ears;  
or

» Notice that some sounds remain clear (often low-pitched sounds such as the bass line in music) while others may seem fuzzy (frequently women's and children's high-pitched voices).

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, it's probably time to ask your doctor for a hearing test.

Although it may seem that a person can live with a degree of hearing loss that may be acceptable to them personally, if left undiagnosed, it may cause other issues such as anxiety, isolation, paranoia, decreased self-esteem or depression.

If it is determined that you are indeed experiencing hearing loss, there are some simple actions you can take that might help decrease any future

deterioration. Have your hearing evaluated by a licensed audiologist or hearing specialist. Discuss possible treatment options, which can include hearing aids, personal listening systems and certain ear protection if working in a loud environment.

If you are having trouble using the phone, Arizona Relay Service offers devices that are alternative to the traditional voice-to-voice telephone. Video phones, captioned telephones and Teletypewriter (TTY) devices help ensure hearing loss doesn't prevent a person from being connected and at a volume comfortable for everyone.

Information: [www.azrelay.org](http://www.azrelay.org).

*Connie Short is an outreach manager for Arizona Relay Service, which is administered by the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. As an outreach manager, Short works to raise awareness and promote the different types of relay services available for the deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled communities throughout the state. Short is a graduate of Arizona State University.*