

## **Hearing Screening in Adults**

Hearing loss is a prevalent chronic condition among adults of all ages. It is recognized that hearing loss increases as a function of age, especially for frequencies at 2000 Hz and above. However, adults tend to ignore its effects, delay their decision to seek audiologic services, and tend to put off recommended treatments.

While more than 30% of people over 65 have some type of hearing loss, 14% of those between 45 and 64 have hearing loss. Close to 8 million people between the ages of 18 and 44 have hearing loss.

Adult hearing screening programs are considered voluntary. It is recommended however, that adults be screened at least every decade through age 50 and at 3-year intervals thereafter.

### **Hearing Screening Techniques for Adults**

Techniques for hearing screening include case history [regarding history of hearing loss, unilateral hearing loss, sudden or rapid progression of hearing loss, unilateral tinnitus, acute or chronic dizziness, recent drainage from the ear(s), and/or pain of discomfort in the ear(s)], visual inspection of the ear, pure-tone screening, and screening by self-assessed judgment of hearing difficulty.

Conventional audiometry where individuals are instructed to raise their hand, click a button, or point to the appropriate ear when they hear a tone is the commonly used procedure for the pure-tone screening.

Screening procedures to detect unilateral or bilateral sensorineural and/or conductive hearing loss greater than 25 dB HL in the frequency region from 1000 through 4000 Hz are applicable in screening adults.

### **What happens if an individual does not pass the screen?**

The Audiology specialists will counsel individuals regarding hearing loss, and may recommend further audiologic evaluation. Individuals should receive audiologic assessment if their case history reflects a condition indicating a risk for hearing loss, if visual inspection indicates any physical abnormality of the outer ear, or if there is otoscopic identification of ear canal abnormality, or impacted cerumen.