

- Hearing aids**Hearing aids reduce the risk of death by almost 25 percent, study finds****Turn up the volume: it's good news for hearing aid wearers**

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Not sure whether hearing aids are worth getting? Well, scientists at the University of Southern California (USC) investigated their benefits and the results are loud and clear: hearing aids can reduce your risk of death by almost 25 per cent.

Despite there being 40 million adults in the US who suffer from hearing loss, only one in ten people who need hearing aids actually uses them. In the UK, only three in ten people who need the devices use them, though 11 million are affected by hearing loss.

The USC scientists hope the findings of their study will encourage people to use hearing aids.

“Personally, as someone who uses a hearing aid, I find this result exciting,” Dr Janet Choi (opposite), lead researcher of the study and otolaryngologist with Keck Medicine of USC,

told BBC Science Focus. “It suggests that there may be a potential protective role of hearing aid use against mortality among those who could benefit from hearing aids.”

The scientists believe that lower levels of depression and dementia are behind the longer lifespans. Improved hearing, according to Choi, goes hand in hand with improvements in mental health and cognition. These improvements promote overall health and therefore longevity.

Published in the journal *The Lancet Healthy Longevity*, the study is the largest to date to investigate the effect of hearing aids on mortality, examining 10,000 participants in total. In the group of 10,000, the scientists identified 1,863 people as having hearing loss. Of these, only 237 people regularly wore hearing aids – meaning at least once a week for five hours. The majority, 1,483 people, were ‘never users’ of hearing aids. The researchers described the remaining group as ‘non-regular users’, meaning they wore the devices less than once a month.

The researchers found that the mortality risk was 25 per cent higher in never users compared to regular users. They also found that this was a steady rate: variables such as the degree of hearing loss, age, ethnicity, income and others didn’t change the benefits of hearing aids. Interestingly, the study didn’t find a difference between non-regular users and never users. When it comes to hearing aids, this suggests you need to go all-in: occasional use of the devices likely doesn’t boost your lifespan.

“I encourage any one experiencing hearing difficulties to get their hearing tested and determine the type and severity of their hearing loss,” Choi said. “You’ll likely be amazed by the sounds you’ve been missing, which you won’t realise until you have your hearing tested and, if suitable, try a hearing aid.”

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