

Meeting with an Audiologist for advice

An audiologist can help patients who may have hearing loss or balance problems because of medications.

If needed, an audiologist can help you improve your listening and speech-reading skills, and can suggest other help available for your hearing.

An audiologist can also work with you to improve your balance.



Other resources:

Hearing Loss Association of America:
www.hearingloss.org

Better Hearing Institute:
www.betterhearing.org

American Academy of Audiology:
www.audiology.org

American Speech Hearing Language Association: www.asha.org/public/

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders:
www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing



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Ototoxicity: Medications and Hearing Loss

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What is Ototoxicity?

A change in hearing or balance caused by medications is called “**ototoxicity**.”

Many medications can harm the ear. For example, some of those used to treat cancer, and some antibiotics, can put you at risk for hearing and balance problems.

Symptoms of ototoxicity include:

- Ringing in your ears (called tinnitus)
- Trouble understanding someone talking to you in a noisy setting
- Dizziness that makes you feel as though you are spinning or off balance
- Trouble keeping your eyes focused on an object

Ototoxic hearing loss usually affects both ears and causes changes in the high pitches of your hearing first.

Ototoxicity may only last a short time, but more likely is permanent and can get worse over time.

Drugs that can cause ototoxicity include:

- Some antibiotics (e.g. gentamycin)
- Cancer-treatment drugs (e.g. cisplatin, methotrexate).
- Diuretics and drugs for heart conditions (e.g. furosemide, quinidine).

Some Facts:

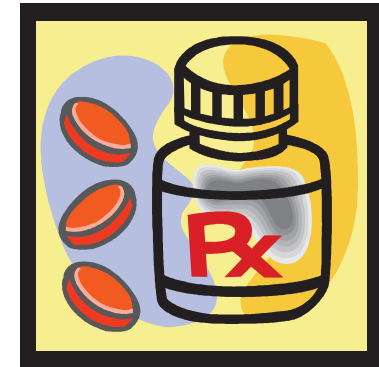
- ✓ Some antibiotics, such as gentamicin and streptomycin, cause more problems with *balance* than hearing.
- ✓ Some cancer-treatment drugs, such as cisplatin, cause more problems with *hearing* than balance.
- ✓ The heart condition drug furosemide is ototoxic especially when taken with other ototoxic drugs.
- ✓ Being around loud sounds when being treated with ototoxic drugs increases the risk of hearing loss.
- ✓ Some people with a family history of ototoxicity are at a greater risk for hearing loss when treated with ototoxic drugs.
- ✓ Hearing loss and balance problems begin gradually, so at first you may not notice a change in your hearing or balance - even though damage may already have occurred.

What can I do to prevent ototoxicity?

You may not be able to prevent ototoxicity if you need an ototoxic drug to treat a life-threatening disease, but you can minimize it by working with your doctor to make good decisions about what treatment is best for you.



One important action you can take is to have your hearing checked before and during treatment, so that small changes in your hearing can be picked up early. Your doctor may then be able to adjust your medications to prevent more hearing loss.



What should I do if I am told I will receive ototoxic medicines?

- ✓ Report any family history of hearing loss to your audiologist and doctor.
- ✓ Have your hearing and balance checked **before** treatment begins.
- ✓ Have your hearing and balance checked **during** treatment.
- ✓ Have your hearing and balance checked again **six months after** treatment has ended.
- ✓ Avoid loud noise during and after treatment.
- ✓ If you can't avoid loud noise, then make sure to use hearing protection.