

# Well-Hearing is Well-Being

How hearing well can impact the social-emotional, cognitive and physical well-being



## Definition of health by WHO<sup>1</sup>:

"Health is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being."

## Underestimated impact of hearing loss



Hearing loss is often considered as a mere sensory problem, but research shows that hearing loss is associated with:

- Co-existing / underlying diseases<sup>2</sup>
- Higher risks of falls<sup>3</sup>, increased use of health care services<sup>3</sup>
- Cognitive problems<sup>3</sup>

## Positive impact of hearing rehabilitation on well-being

Research shows that hearing rehabilitation is linked to improvements in these 3 dimensions of well-being<sup>3</sup>:



### Social-emotional well-being:

Hearing loss can lead to:

- Smaller social networks<sup>3</sup>
- More feelings of loneliness<sup>3</sup>
- Withdrawal and social isolation<sup>3</sup>

Hearing aid adopters report social benefits of hearing aid use<sup>3</sup>:

- Better ability to engage in group activities
- Positive impact on relationships

▶ Hearing well fosters easier social engagement, stronger connections and a more positive outlook.



### Cognitive well-being:

Persons with hearing loss are more at risk of developing clinically significant cognitive problems at older age.<sup>3</sup>

Emerging evidence shows: hearing aids may delay the onset of cognitive decline<sup>3</sup>:

- Cognitive function in older adults who use hearing aids can not only remain stable, but can improve significantly over time
- More frequent use of hearing aids is associated with greater improvements in cognitive function

▶ Hearing well supports cognitive functioning, and more frequent use of hearing aids is associated with greater improvements in cognitive function.



### Physical well-being:

Hearing loss can:

- Make it more challenging to monitor changes in our acoustical environment through reduced access to subtle sounds and problems in localizing sound sources<sup>3</sup>
- Have an impact on postural control, especially in an older population<sup>3</sup>

Emerging evidence shows that hearing well through hearing aid adoption may reduce the risk of falling.<sup>3</sup>

▶ Hearing well might enable people to live a more active and healthier lifestyle, and hearing aids may offer greater environmental awareness and improved balance.

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Hearing aids allow tinnitus sufferers to hear environmental sounds and draw attention away from tinnitus.<sup>4</sup>



Changing the conversation from "hearing loss – a sensory problem" to "hearing care – a vital part of healthy living", might help motivate more people affected by hearing loss to become active at an earlier stage and to improve their social-emotional, cognitive and physical well-being!

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). *Constitution of the World Health Organization*. Geneva, Switzerland. 1947. <sup>2</sup> Besser, J., Stropahl, M., Urry, E., & Launer, S. (2018). Comorbidities of hearing loss and the implications of multimorbidity for audiological care. *Hearing Research*, 369, 3–14. <sup>3</sup> Vercammen, C., Ferguson, M., Kramer, S.E., Meis, M., Singh, G., Timmer, B., ... & Pelosi, A. (2020). Well-Hearing is Well-Being. *Hearing Review*, 27(3), 18–22. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from <https://www.hearingreview.com/hearing-loss/patient-care/counseling-education/well-hearing-is-well-being> <sup>4</sup> Henry, J.A., McMillan, G., Dann, S., Bennett, K., Griest, S., Theodoroff, S., Silverman, S. P., Whitchard, S., & Saunders, G. (2017). Tinnitus Management: Randomized Controlled Trial Comparing Extended-Wear Hearing Aids, Conventional Hearing Aids, and Combination Instruments. *J Am Acad Audiol*. Jun;28(6):546–561. doi: 10.3766/jaaa.16067. PMID: 28590898.