

*William Luxford, MD, Otolaryngologist
House Ear Clinic, Los Angeles CA*



Patients with diabetes are more than twice as likely as those without the disease to have hearing loss, according to a recent National Institutes of Health (NIH) study. Overall, more than 40 percent of people with diabetes in the study had some degree of hearing loss.

People with diabetes should ask their doctors to check their hearing. This should be routine. A hearing check can be invaluable in identifying diabetic patients with potential hearing loss giving them an opportunity to receive the treatment they need.

The study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, was conducted by researchers who analyzed data from hearing tests, administered from 1999 to 2004, to 5,140 participants in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Its findings prompted investigators from the NIH to recommend that physicians encourage their patients with diabetes to have their hearing checked.

For years, physicians who treat people with diabetes have regularly ensured that their patients receive regular vision check-ups. This important study underscores the need for physicians now to encourage each of their patients to get their hearing checked as well. Both vision loss and hearing loss are associated with diabetes.

Studies conducted by BHI and others show that people with untreated hearing loss have a lower [quality of life](#) and even earn [less income](#) than people with normal hearing or people who have treated their hearing loss by using hearing aids. Modern hearing aids that use digital technology can help most people with hearing loss.