

As time passes it is normal for hearing to deteriorate gradually. At some point it will become necessary to re-tune your hearing aids or move to more powerful ones to help you hear better. Typically this deterioration may occur over a period of three years or more.

If your hearing changes suddenly (such as overnight) by a large amount, in one or both of your ears, please contact your GP straight away. If required, your GP may arrange some treatment or refer you to the ear, nose and throat department at the hospital to investigate this. Remember, this is only necessary if your hearing drops right down suddenly for no apparent reason. Ear infections or too much ear wax can also cause your hearing to drop, but this type of problem can easily be treated by your own GP.

If a sudden sensorineural hearing loss is suspected clinically (normal ear drums, appropriate tuning fork tests) then a two week reducing course of oral steroids (starting at e.g.. 60 mg prednisolone daily reducing by 10 mg every 2 days) may improve the outcome. The evidence for this is not strong, and if there are any contraindications or if the hearing loss occurred more than two weeks previously then the balance of risk and benefit is probably against any treatment.

Advice can be obtained from the on call ear, nose and throat SHO (senior house officer) at Bedford Hospital (01234 355122 bleep 300).

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