

## Patient information

# Asymmetrical sensorineural hearing loss

### Your journey so far

Most likely you have noticed a gradual decline in your hearing. Your GP found nothing untoward and so referred you to our audiology team to see if a hearing aid would benefit you.

Today an audiologist has examined your ears, asked you about your hearing and performed a hearing test.

This test shows some asymmetry (a difference in your hearing) between your left and right hearing nerves. Otherwise your ear examination has been normal and so at this time it is not felt you need to see an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) doctor in person.

Normally we never find out why one ear deteriorates quicker than another but there can be a range of rare causes that can be picked up by a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan of your ears. Our phone clinic is to discuss whether you might benefit from this test and if you wish to have it.

### Telephone clinic

We will go through your symptoms again to make sure nothing has been missed.

Together you and the ENT team will decide if an MRI is required and wanted. We will then go through the MRI safety questionnaire at the back of this leaflet. Please read this prior to our phone call. Either way you do not need to have the investigations before having a hearing aid fitted.

You will have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

## **What is an MRI scan?**

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a type of scan that uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves to produce detailed images of inside the body.

We are more likely to recommend a scan if:

- You are less than 75 years old
- You have more than one frequency on your hearing test that is asymmetrical
- If any other symptoms are found when discussing your history on the phone

During your MRI you will need to lie still for approximately 40 minutes. Some people can find it noisy and claustrophobic. You can have music of your choice. It can be done at West Suffolk Hospital.

## **What are my options?**

We are looking for rare causes of hearing loss, so often patients choose to have no further investigations, which we would support. If you would like an investigation, then you will be offered an MRI scan. If you do not want or are unable to have an MRI Scan for medical reasons, then we will discuss other investigations that you can have during your phone clinic.

If we find any cause of your asymmetrical hearing loss, then early detection of the problem will allow us to refer you to other teams for management, these may be at West Suffolk Hospital or Addenbrooke's Hospital.

If you choose not to have an MRI Scan at this time, you can change your mind at a later date. You can also monitor your own symptoms, if you develop tinnitus (a ringing noise in your ears) or dizziness then we would recommend you see your local GP, who can refer you back to our clinic.

If you choose to have an MRI Scan, it is most likely that you will only need one scan in your lifetime even if your symptoms deteriorate.

## **What happens next?**

If you decide to have an MRI Scan you will get an appointment through the post from our radiology department at West Suffolk Hospital.

Your results will be delivered to our ENT department and we will write to you if they are normal. If we find something we will book you an appointment to discuss the results.

If you and the audiologist have decided hearing aids would benefit you today, then fitting them can continue as per the audiology pathway with no delays.

We are committed to including patients in decision making about their care. We are trialling this format of clinic to reduce unnecessary trips to hospital for you while still being involved with decision about your care. We would appreciate your feedback.

## **MRI safety questionnaire**

Do you have a pacemaker (electrical device implanted in your chest) or internal cardiac (heart) device?	Yes/No
Have you had an Intra-cranial (Brain) surgery such as an aneurysm repair?	Yes/No
Do you have implanted pumps?	Yes/No
Do you have:	
Programmable Hydrocephalus Shunt?	Yes/No
Cochlear Implant?	Yes/No
Neurostimulator?	Yes/No
Metallic Occular (eye) Foreign Body?	Yes/No
Pregnancy?	Yes/No
Weight – greater than 150kg?	Yes/No
Have you had surgery in the last 8 weeks?	Yes/No
Do you suffer from claustrophobia?	Yes/No
Can you lie still? (approx. 40 minutes)	Yes/No
Are you on oxygen?	Yes/No
Do you need an escort?	Yes/No
Have you been told you have MRSA or another infection?	Yes/No

## **Protecting your hearing in general**

Tips for patients, friends and family:

- Turn down music. Use devices at 60% of their maximum volume for 60 minutes maximum a day

- Use earplugs in loud places or when using loud machinery like mowing the lawn
- Don't put up with noise at work
- Use ear protectors
- Ask people to face you when they speak
- Ask people to speak clearer, not louder
- Turn off the TV / radio when you are not listening directly to them
- Stop smoking
- Discuss your medication with ENT or your GP, as some can affect your hearing

## Useful websites

For more information about the hospital, MRI and ENT departments:

<https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/Home.aspx>

For information on hearing loss and hearing aids:

<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/hearing-health/hearing-loss-and-deafness/hearing-aids-and-other-treatments/hearing-aids/>  
<https://www.entuk.org/ear-conditions>

<https://patient.info/ears-nose-throat-mouth/hearing-problems>

For information on protecting your hearing

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/top-10-tips-to-help-protect-your-hearing/>  
<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/hearing-health/protect-your-hearing/>

## Ask three questions .....

.....is helping patients to become involved in their own healthcare decisions\*

Normally there will be choices to make about your healthcare. For example you may be asked:

- To decide whether or not you want to have treatment
- To choose between different types of treatment

- If you want to continue with the same treatment

What you choose to do should depend on what is important to you.

If you are asked to make a choice you may have lots of questions you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

Ask three questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each options for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

## Contact details

Audiology department: 01284 713507

Email the Audiology secretary: [audiology@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:audiology@wsh.nhs.uk)

Please state your name, contact details and concern and we will reply to you within seven days.

MRI department: 01284 712891

*\*'Ask 3 questions' is based on Shephard HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011; 84: 379-85*

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>*



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