

# LISTEN UP! And Ask...

## Do Your Benefits Cover Hearing Health?

Employees and their families rely on their hearing every day to interact with the world around them. Hearing well helps people remain fully engaged on the job, at school and with their loved ones and friends. Unfortunately, hearing loss is on the rise across age groups, and too few people are seeking the care they need.

Because hearing health is so important to overall health and productivity, most people assume that hearing loss evaluations and treatment would be covered by their medical insurance – but this often is not the case. Without this coverage, finances quickly become a barrier for people seeking the care they need.

Evaluate your current benefits package to understand whether hearing health is covered. If not, take a stand and request a change. **Hearing is simply too important to be silent.**

### IS HEARING LOSS A PROBLEM?

According to a national survey by EPIC Hearing Healthcare, **12 percent of full-time employees have a diagnosed hearing problem** for which they are seeking treatment. Another **30 percent suspect hearing loss, but have not sought treatment.** This response was consistent across age groups, showing that younger employees are at risk as much as older ones.

Children are at risk as well. In fact, according to the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination survey results published in 1998, more than **one in seven** U.S. children have low-frequency or high-frequency hearing loss in at least one ear. Hearing loss among children is not only common, it appears to be on the rise. According to a study by Dr. Josef Shargorodsky published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, there was a **30 percent increase in hearing loss in adolescents** (ages 12-19) between 1988 and 2006.



### “I Spoke Up, and HR Listened”

“When our 8-year-old daughter, Lilly, was diagnosed with hearing loss, our top priority was her treatment. When we learned her hearing aids were about \$4,000, we couldn’t believe our insurance didn’t cover them.

“I went to our benefits/HR team, who appealed to our parent company in London – and they changed our policy! We are so fortunate, but with this kind of expense, it makes you wonder how many children with hearing deficits aren’t getting the hearing aids they need.”

– **Jennifer Howard**  
Employee of United  
Business Media



## HOW DOES HEARING LOSS HURT?

Hearing is an important facet of communication – keeping us informed, safe and connected in today’s fast-paced and technology-enabled world. Untreated hearing loss interferes with people’s ability to keep up with the communication around them, making them feel stressed and disconnected. According to the Better Hearing Institute, studies have linked untreated hearing loss with higher rates of depression, diminished overall health, lower household income and increased risk to personal safety.

Of employees with untreated hearing loss in EPIC’s survey:

- 61% often ask people to repeat what they have said
- 42% often misunderstand what is being said
- 40% pretend to hear when they cannot

The impact on children is just as significant. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, hearing loss in children can be linked to delayed speech and learning problems. Struggles to communicate may lead to social isolation and poor self-esteem. Hearing problems can even impact kids’ future job choices.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

**If you are an employee, talk to HR.** Ask your benefits professional whether you have insurance (medical or supplemental) that covers:

- Visits to an audiologist for a complete diagnostic evaluation at least every two years for adults and annually for children.
- Coverage of hearing aid treatment.

**If you are an employer, make sure hearing health is covered.**

- Check with your medical insurance providers to see what is included.
- Consider supplemental hearing insurance (similar to vision or dental). EPIC Hearing Healthcare is the first and largest provider of hearing insurance nationwide, providing access to a robust network of hearing professionals as well as substantial savings on hearing aids from major manufacturers.
- If you offer a HSA or FSA, remind employees that hearing aids are a covered expense.



## Advocating for All Children

“When I learned I had hearing loss, I worried there were so many things I couldn’t do, but today, with the help of my hearing aids, I’m an honors student in mainstream classes, I sing, dance, and play the flute and piano – and I’m advocating for *all* children to have access to the hearing care they need.”

– **Sophia Lebano**

Age 14, Founder of “Team Lebano” fundraising group for “Hear We Go” 5K

## Did you know?

From **\$.35 to \$1.75 per member per month**, hearing insurance is one of the most affordable benefits available for its value.

**HEAR BETTER  
LIVE FULLY**

## WORRIED ABOUT STIGMA?

Nearly half of employees in EPIC’s survey say they would be concerned if their employer suspected or knew they had hearing loss. Show support with *Listen Hear!* education materials that encourage people to “Listen Up” and take steps now to address hearing loss, and to safeguard healthy hearing for the future. Free resources can be found at [www.EPIChearing.com/ListenHear](http://www.EPIChearing.com/ListenHear).

For more information and complete citations, please download “The Need to Make Noise About Hearing at Work” white paper at [www.EPIChearing.com/ListenHear](http://www.EPIChearing.com/ListenHear).