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**Untreated Lyme Disease Could Lead to Hearing Loss**

**RESTON,** **Va., Aug. 12, 2019—**Although the Centers for Disease Control does not receive reports on everyone contracting Lyme disease, the CDC estimates that there are approximately [329,000 cases per year](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/21/9/15-0417_article). The American Academy of Audiology, working closely with the CDC, warns the public to be vigilant in preventing tick interactions. “Anyone working or spending time outdoors should take precautions to prevent contact with ticks,” stated Lisa Christensen, Au.D., president of the American Academy of Audiology and audiology program manager for Cook Children’s Medical Center in Ft. Worth, Texas. The CDC also cautions that, in some cases, untreated Lyme disease can lead to brain or nerve problems. In an effort to help consumers, the CDC has created a [Lyme toolkit](https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/toolkit/index.html).

[The CDC is also tracking the explosive growth of ticks](https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/pubs/vector-borne-disease-final_508.pdf) and attributes much of this growth to climate change. Numbers of ticks are growing in regions that have not had large numbers in the past and, in many areas, the hard freezes that used to kill them in winter are no longer prevalent.

In addition to the many diseases and symptoms brought on by tick-born illnesses, the National Center for Biotechnology Information, has studies including one that points to a connection between [Lyme disease and hearing loss](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23303170). A study published in Feb. 2018, [Otolaryngological Symptoms in Patients Treated for Tick-Borne Diseases](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29513260), found tinnitus as one of the most common symptoms. Tinnitus is a symptom that causes ringing or buzzing in the ears.

For Teresa Jennings, 58, there is no doubt that Lyme disease led to hearing loss. While executive director of the Barrington Park District in Barrington, Ill., she was diagnosed with Lyme disease in 2011. With multiple symptoms including chronic fatigue, her hearing in both ears also began to severely decline. She received medical treatment for her illness but her hearing ability did not return. An MRI confirmed that she had neurogical Lyme disease. When she couldn’t afford the hearing aids an audiologist recommended, she purchased less expensive hearing aids from a big-box discount store.

When Jennings was in danger of losing her job from hearing loss (the inexpensive hearing aids didn’t work,) she went to an audiologist who was willing to help her find financial assistance to afford the more expensive hearing aids and she was finally able to hear again. With audiologic rehabilitation and customized and professionally programmed hearing aids, Jennings was able to fully return to her job and her normal productivity.

“Seeing an audiologist to have hearing aids properly fit is extremely important,” stated Christensen. “Anyone experiencing any amount of hearing loss should immediately see an audiologist.”

For more information on the American Academy of Audiology or to find an audiologist, visit [www.howsyourhearing.org](http://www.howsyourhearing.org).

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The American Academy of Audiology is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. Representing the interests of approximately 14,000 audiologists nationwide, the Academy is dedicated to providing quality hearing care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders. For more information or to find an audiologist, go to [www.howsyourhearing.org](http://www.howsyourhearing.org).

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