

Is it time to see an audiologist?

BY TREY CLINE
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When you think about getting your health checked, you probably think of visiting a primary care doctor or dentist. But have you ever thought about your hearing? If you've noticed changes in how you hear or experience things like ringing in your ears or dizziness, it may be time to visit an audiologist.

What is an audiologist?

An audiologist is a licensed healthcare professional who specializes in evaluating, diagnosing and managing hearing and balance disorders. Audiologists work with patients of all ages, from newborns to older adults, and play an essential role in helping people stay connected to their world through better hearing and communication.

Audiologists can:

- Complete comprehensive hearing tests to assess the type and degree of hearing loss
- Recommend appropriate intervention options such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and/or assistive listening devices
- Complete advanced testing to assess and manage balance disorders related to the inner ear
- Fit and manage hearing aids, cochlear implants, and assistive listening devices
- Diagnose and manage tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ears)
- Offer counseling and education for patients and families
- Provide hearing protection and preventative care for those at risk of noise-induced hearing loss

How do I know if I need to see an audiologist?

Hearing loss is often gradual and many people may not notice the signs right away. Here are some common symptoms that may indicate it is time to schedule an evaluation with an audiologist:

- You frequently ask people to repeat themselves
- Conversations are hard to follow, especially in noisy environments
- You think others are mumbling or speaking too softly
- You need to turn up the volume on the TV or radio
- You hear a ringing or buzzing sound



(Photo by Mark Paton/Unsplash)

(tinnitus) that nobody else hears

- You feel off balance or dizzy, especially when standing or walking
- You avoid social situations because it's hard to hear or keep up

Even children can benefit from audiologic care. If your child isn't meeting speech and language milestones, doesn't respond to their name, or has frequent ear infections, an audiologist can help determine if hearing is part of the issue.

Why hearing health matters

Hearing is critical to communication, relationships, learning, and safety. Untreated hearing loss has been linked to social isolation, depression, and even cognitive decline in older adults. The good news is that early intervention can improve quality of life and overall well-being.

What to expect at an audiology

appointment

A typical visit with an audiologist includes a detailed conversation about your hearing history, symptoms, and lifestyle needs. You'll undergo a comprehensive audiologic evaluation (hearing test) in a sound-treated booth to determine your hearing sensitivity. Based on the results, the audiologist will discuss management options — whether that's hearing aids, a cochlear implant evaluation, medical referral, communication strategies, or simple hearing protection tips.

Take the first step

If you suspect you're experiencing hearing or balance issues or simply want to take a proactive approach to your health, an audiologist can provide the answers and support you need. Just like eye exams and dental visits, hearing check-ups should be part of your routine health care, especially as individuals age or have been regularly exposed to loud environments

Proposed Medicaid cuts could put 35 Kentucky hospitals at risk of closing

BY MELISSA PATRICK
Kentucky Health News

In a letter to President Donald Trump, U.S. Senate Democrats have raised concerns about the risk his "Big Beautiful Bill" will have on rural hospitals. The letter lists 338 of them that will be at risk of closing if the proposed cuts are implemented, with 35 of them in Kentucky — the most of any state, Samantha Valentino reports for WKYT-TV.

"It'd be devastating to what is a strong rural hospital system," Gov. Andy Beshear, who has been sounding the alarm about this for months, told Valentino.

The letter was also addressed to U.S. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and U.S. Majority Leader John Thune.

The Congressional Budget Office says the proposed changes would save more than \$800 billion in federal spending over the next decade, but Beshear says the proposed cuts to the Medicaid program, which covers 50% of the state's children and 70% of its seniors in longterm care, will come at a cost to people's lives, Valentino reports.

Beshear also noted that the closure of 35 rural hospitals would have a grave impact on employment in those communities.

"Our rural hospitals are typically the second-largest employer in the county that they're located in, after the public school system. Now think about all those jobs being wiped out," Beshear told Valentino.

When WKYT asked for comment about the Democrats' concerns about the impact of the bill on rural hospitals, Congressmen Andy Barr, R-Lexington, and Hal Rogers, R-Somerset, said they support the changes, with Barr saying the changes will refocus the program to be available for those truly in need and Rogers saying the changes will remove "waste, fraud and abuse" from the program. Rogers also pointed to the Kentucky Hospital Association's support for the bill.

KHA sent this statement to WKYT about the cuts: "The Kentucky Hospital Association endorses the Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill, as passed by the House, protects the Kentucky Medicaid program, which means that our patients will continue to have access to the care they need, when they need it. If the bill does not pass the Senate, there is a strong likelihood that our Medicaid patients will not be able to access all of the services our hospitals currently provide. We have called on the U.S. Senate to concur in the House Medicaid provisions."



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