MAYO CLINIC

Can cochlear implants slow dementia in older adults?

Video	Audio
	Imagine the effort it would take to constantly squint at a blurry chalkboard. That's similar to what the brain goes through when someone is experiencing hearing loss.
Nicholas Deep, M.D. Otolaryngology Mayo Clinic	"As we work harder to hear, the brain is utilizing extra cognitive resources just to listen in and make sense of the words and sentences. And that can be fatiguing to the brain."
	"Similarly, if we don't stimulate the auditory pathway, those synapses become weaker and weaker over time. They can even begin to shrink, and that can also accelerate cognitive decline."
	Severe hearing loss can increase the risk of dementia fivefold. However, it's a modifiable risk.
	"A cochlear implant is a device to restore hearing in patients with advanced hearing loss by bypassing the damaged inner ear hair cells and providing direct stimulation to the hearing nerve."
	Unlike a hearing aid, which just amplifies sound, a cochlear implant actually improves the speech clarity of that sound, making conversation easier.
	"We know that treating hearing loss, whether with hearing aids or cochlear implantation, has tremendous quality of life

	benefits in terms of improving independence and reducing social isolation."
	And it may even reduce the rate of cognitive decline for those at greater risk.
	"A recent large, prospective trial found that in older adults at risk for cognitive decline, use of the hearing aid for three years reduced their cognitive decline by 48%. So it really underscores the importance of hearing and its ability to maintain healthy cognitive function."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm DeeDee Stiepan.