

## **Idiopathic Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss**

- The cause of sensorineural hearing loss (SSNHL) is often not readily apparent and thus called idiopathic. It rarely affects both ears and can be associated with other symptoms such as tinnitus, vertigo, and fullness in the ear.
- Approximately one-third to two-thirds of patients with ISSNHL may recover some percentage of their hearing within 2 weeks. Those who recover half of their hearing in the first 2 weeks have a better prognosis. Patients with minimal change within the first 2 weeks are unlikely to show significant recovery.
- Early recognition of ISSNHL is important. Although there is a lack of evidence-based research, it is generally accepted that intervention may increase recovery.
- Many treatments have been proposed for ISSNHL, but research about their effects is limited by small sample size and varying experimental designs. The benefit of therapy may include more prompt and complete recovery of hearing, but side effects also must be considered when choosing among the available options.
- Watchful waiting is an alternative to active treatment as between 1/3 and 2/3 of patients may recover hearing on their own and can be monitored with repeat hearing tests.
- Sudden hearing loss can be frightening and may result in embarrassment, frustration, anxiety, insecurity, loneliness, depression, and social isolation. Individual or group counseling can be helpful in supporting patients with ISSNHL.
- Audiologic rehabilitation needs to be addressed as soon as the hearing loss is identified. This includes counseling and discussion of nonsurgical amplification and hearing restoration options.
- Financial concerns should be addressed to ensure appropriate follow-up and testing in an effort to attain the best possible outcome.