Working with Your Audiologist

Your audiologist will conduct a comprehensive hearing evaluation to determine if you are a candidate for hearing aids. Based on your evaluation, the audiologist may recommend hearing aids or make a referral to investigate medical or surgical options.

Hearing aids are similar to a miniature public address system. The microphone picks up the sound, the amplifier makes the sound louder, and the receiver (speaker) delivers the sound. Ninety-eight percent of all hearing aids are digital. Digital technology allows advantageous manipulation of sound in many useful ways. Some hearing aids are completely automatic, while others have user-adjustable controls. Your audiologist will work with you to review hearing aid options. The two of you will select the best configuration for your particular needs. All hearing aids are powered by batteries.

To “Find an Audiologist” in your local area, visit www.HowsYourHearing.org.

American Academy of Audiology

11730 Plaza America Drive, Suite 300
Reston, VA 20190
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www.audiology.org

Hearing aids are the primary means of managing hearing loss that cannot be treated medically or surgically.
Sample Sample
Receiver in Canal (CIC)

This smallest custom earpiece.

This custom instrument fits deep into the ear canal through thin plastic tubing and a tiny earpiece.

In-the-Canal (ITC)

Smallest ITC, mini-BTE, and completely-in-the-canal (CIC).

Completely-in-the-Canal (CIC)

This smallest custom instrument fits deep into the ear canal.

Types

Hearing aid styles may be broadly classified as “standard” or “custom.” Standard hearing aids include: behind-the-ear (BTE), mini-BTE, and receiver-in-the-ear (RITE) devices. These products are designed to fit most ears and usually require some customization of the earpiece and the connection of the device to the ear. Custom hearing aids include: in-the-ear (ITE), in-the-canal (ITC), and completely-in-the-canal (CIC). These products require a custom-molded shell that houses the electronics and directs sound into the ear.

Fittings

After your hearing aids have been selected, they must be fitted appropriately. Hearing aids must amplify sounds so they can be heard comfortably without causing discomfort, and hearing aids must be secure and physically comfortable in the ear. The hearing aids are adjusted using a computer by the audiologist, and the result can be measured.

Features

Several features are available to improve the hearing aid experience. The most common are:

- Directional microphones to enhance speech understanding in noise,
- Noise management to improve listening comfort in noisy situations,
- Feedback cancellation to alleviate the annoyance of whistling and buzzing,
- Telephone programs to access sound from phones and other sound sources.

One or Two Hearing Aids?

If both ears need amplification, your audiologist will recommend two hearing aids. Research has shown two hearing aids provide superior benefits for the majority of people with regard to better word recognition in quiet and noisy backgrounds, better quality of sound, better localization ability, more natural hearing, and so forth. Research has shown that when both ears are candidates for hearing aids and only one ear is fitted, the unaided ear may lose speech recognition ability more rapidly than the fitted ear.

Hearing Aid Compatibility Videos

Choosing a cell phone that works for you

www.accesswireless.org

Made up of experts in HOCO

Maintenance and Insurance

Your audiologist will review with you the details of your insurance coverage (if available), financing options, loss, theft and damage, insurance warranty, service protocols, maintenance advice, as well as introductory period and return policies.

As with all electronics, hearing aids require care and maintenance. This includes handling in carefully, not exposing the hearing aids to water or chemicals, and keeping them very clean. Your audiologist will discuss and demonstrate proper dirt and care as well as maintenance techniques and maintenance products.

One hearing aid or two? It is very important to remember that hearing aids work best when both ears are fitted.

Expectations and Outcomes

Even with the best technology, it is important to maintain realistic expectations. While hearing aids make sounds easier to hear, they will not restore normal hearing. Hearing aids reintroduce you to a world of sound, and it takes time to adapt to the new sounds. As with all electronics, hearing aids require care and maintenance clearly reduces the need for repair.

Untreated hearing loss impairs memory and may cause difficulty related to learning new tasks. Untreated hearing loss may result in decreased job performance and has been shown to negatively impact wages and earnings. Hearing loss treated with hearing aids has been shown to decrease fatigue, irritability, risk to personal safety, and withdrawal from social situations. Further, in many research studies, hearing aid use has been shown to increase the wearer’s quality of life.