

Referral Guide for Pharmacists: When Should You Refer to Your Local Audiologist?

Hearing loss is on the rise, and as a pharmacist, you may have customers coming in asking about devices that could help them hear. From hearing aids to over-the-counter hearing aids, making a decision on a device is a big personal decision for an individual. Keep this guide handy to help you explain what an audiologist is, what they treat, and when a referral is necessary.

What Is an Audiologist?

Audiologists are the primary health-care professionals who evaluate, diagnose, treat, and manage hearing loss and balance disorders in individuals of all ages from infants and teens to adults and the elderly.

What Types of Symptoms Can Audiologists Diagnose and Treat/Manage?

Audiologists can diagnose and treat or manage different types of hearing loss, tinnitus, vertigo, dizziness, and fatigue.

What Types of Conditions Can Audiologists Diagnose and Treat/Manage?

Audiologists treat and help individuals manage many hearing and balance conditions including:

- Sensorineural Hearing Loss
- Hidden Hearing Loss
- Genetic Hearing Loss
- Congenital Cytomegalovirus (cCMV) Infection
- Noise-Induced Hearing Loss
- Auditory Processing Disorders
- Ototoxicity
- Unilateral Hearing Loss
- Cerumen/Wax Impaction

How to Spot Signs of Hearing Loss

There are many degrees of hearing loss. Common signs of hearing loss to talk with your customer about includes if they,

- Ask people to repeat what they say.
- Feel like others are always mumbling or not speaking clearly.

- Have difficulty hearing and understanding speech in noisy environments.
- Miss words or phrases on the telephone.
- Turn the volume up on the television or radio louder than normal.

Is a Referral to an Audiologist the Right Choice for Your Customer?

Whether it's to help determine what type of hearing loss your customer has or to assist in finding the right hearing solution, your local audiologist is here. You should refer your customer to an audiologist when your customer has a:

- Malformed or misshapen ear at birth or due to trauma
- History of drainage from the ear within the previous 90 days
- History of sudden or rapidly progressive hearing loss within the previous 90 days
- Dizziness just experienced or experienced over a long time
- Hearing loss in only one ear or sudden or recent onset of hearing loss within the previous 90 days
- Significant ear wax accumulation or a foreign body in the ear canal
- Pain or discomfort in the ear

How To Find an Audiologist Closest to Your Customer

Finding an audiologist that is the right fit for your customer is important.

You or your customer can use the American Academy of Audiology's free Find an Audiologist Directory to search for an audiologist in their area.

For more consumer-friendly resources on hearing and balance care, visit www.howsyourhearing.org.