

EXPECTATIONS FROM A HEARING AID

A Hearing Aid **CAN**:

- Make soft sounds louder, thus making them easier to hear.
- Allow you to hear in some situations that used to give you trouble, such as conversations.
- Help you hear high-pitch sounds better, thus helping you to understand speech better.
- Help you feel more at ease in social situations by making it easier to hear what is being said.

A Hearing Aid **CANNOT**:

- Cure distortion in your hearing. Distortion is usually due to a problem in your inner ear. A hearing aid will mechanically equalize the sounds you hear, but not correct the damaged inner ear.
- Allow you to hear well in ALL situations of background noise. An advanced hearing aid noise setting will enhance speech and reduce background noise; however noise will likely continue to be the most difficult listening environment. Lip-reading will compliment the sounds you hear in all situations, especially noisy places.
- Amplify only what you want to hear.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THOSE CONSIDERING HEARING AIDS

DO I NEED HEARING AIDS?

A good rule of thumb is, if your friends and family think you need hearing aids, you probably do. Usually, family and friends are the first to notice a hearing loss before the person with the hearing loss. This is because they are doing all the work – acting as human hearing aids, so to speak. When you find that your hearing loss is affecting your daily life you should pursue hearing aids. If you find yourself frequently asking “what?” or “huh?” having difficulty hearing when there is background noise, or accusing others of not speaking clearly, you *need* hearing aids.

WHO DO I SEE TO GET HEARING AIDS?

The audiologist is a health care professional uniquely qualified by virtue of education and experience to treat hearing loss with hearing aids. Access to professional services for follow-up care and adjustment post hearing aid fitting is as important as the devices themselves. Beware; discount hearing aids often come with discount services.

DO I REALLY NEED TWO?

With some exceptions, if you have hearing loss in both ears, you should have hearing aids in both ears. There are three primary reasons for this:

1. The brain needs input from both sides of the head for balanced hearing.
2. The brain needs balanced hearing to be able to localize sounds.
3. The brain needs balanced hearing to hear voices in noise.*

* Difficulty hearing in noise is one of the most common complaints we hear. A single hearing aid will be of benefit in a quiet listening situation. However, in a noisy situation such as a restaurant, dining room, work environment, car, the brain needs input from both ears to pull out a specific speech signal from the background noise. **Hearing aids cannot do this alone!** Advanced technology hearing aids often employ a circuit to help reduce noise; however, your brain will not perceive this benefit from only one ear.

WILL HEARING AIDS PICK UP BACKGROUND SOUNDS?

Yes, just like most normal hearing ears do. Hearing aids do not eliminate background sounds, but hearing loss does. As hearing loss progresses, many environmental sounds become inaudible and the brain forgets them. Remember, we hear with our brain, not with our ears. Ears pick up sound, but it is brain’s job to process and make sense of the sounds. With hearing aids, the brain is suddenly made aware of environmental sounds and thinks they must surely be important. Until it learns otherwise, the brain will pay too much attention to these sounds. By using hearing aids consistently, the brain will learn to more appropriately prioritize the sounds and they will become less of an annoyance.

CAN I GET THOSE REALLY TINY HEARING AIDS?

You are probably referring to the completely-in-the-canal, or CIC, hearing aids. CIC hearing aids are not appropriate for everyone. Candidacy for CIC hearing aids depends on the

severity of your hearing loss, the configuration of your hearing loss, and the shape and size of your ear canal. The CIC devices are desirable due to the appealing cosmetics; however, they are not necessarily the most advanced or best technology devices.

HOW TO COPE WITH DIFFICULT LISTENING SITUATIONS

- Ask speakers to speak in a good light and while facing the listener so that speech-reading skills can be used.
- Ask the speaker to speak clearly and naturally but not to shout or exaggerate their articulation.
- If you do not understand what a speaker is saying, ask the speaker to repeat or rephrase the statement.
- If entering a group in the middle of a conversation, ask one person to sum up the gist of the conversation.
- If someone is speaking at a distance, that person should be asked to stand closer.
- If the speaker turns his head away, ask him or her to face you to permit optimal speech-reading and listening.
- If you are attempting to understand speech in the presence of noise, try to move yourself and the speaker away from the source of the noise.
- When in a communication situation requiring exact information, such as asking directions or obtaining schedules for a trip, request that the speaker write the crucial information.
- If the speaker is talking while eating, smoking, or chewing, request that he or she not do so because of the difficulties speech-reading.
- A person who has a unilateral loss should be sure to keep his or her better ear facing the speaker at all times.
- If possible, avoid rooms with poor acoustics. If meetings are held in such rooms, request that they be transferred to other rooms with less reverberation.
- If a speaker at a meeting cannot be heard, request that he use a microphone.
- Come early to meetings so that you can sit close to the speaker. Avoid taking a seat near a wall to minimize the possibility of reverberation. This is particularly important for those who use hearing aids.
- If you are going to a movie or to a theatre, read the reviews in advance to familiarize yourself with the plot.
- In an extremely noisy situation, limit conversation to before the noise has started or after it has subsided.

HOW FAMILY AND FRIENDS CAN HELP A HEARING IMPAIRED INDIVIDUAL

- Speak clearly and slightly louder than normal. However, shouting will not make your message any clearer, and may sometimes distort your speech.
- Face the hearing impaired person as you speak to him/her. Never speak from another room.
- The best distance when speaking to a hearing impaired person is 3-6 feet.
- Be sure to get the person's attention before you start talking to them.
- Never speak directly into the person's ear. Doing so prevents the listener from making use of visual cues.
- Avoid chewing, eating, or covering your mouth with your hands when speaking because your speech will be more difficult to understand.
- Facial expressions, gestures, lip and body movements all give cues to the hearing impaired person. Therefore, good lighting on the face of the speaker is important.
- Avoid excessive environmental noise. If the environment is noisy, seek a quiet spot or reduce noise as much as possible.
- Phrase your speech in short, very simple sentences. If the person still does not understand, rephrase the sentence.
- Be patient with mistakes due to misunderstood words.
- Encourage participation in group activities. Whenever possible, give the hearing impaired person a clue as to the topic of the conversation.
- Include the hearing impaired person in all discussions about him/her. Doing so will help relieve the feelings of isolation common in hearing impaired individuals.
- Recognize that hard of hearing people hear and understand less well when they are tired or ill.
- Write important information down if necessary. Have communication aides available (paper, pencils, etc.)
- If the person is responding poorer than usual, question the function of the hearing aid (batteries, etc) or a change in hearing status due to cold, etc. A physician should examine the patient if the latter is suspected.
- If the problem is definitely hearing aid related, consult the audiologist.

HEARING AID FITTING INFORMATION

We offer a number of different hearing aid models, styles, and technology options from a variety of manufacturers. The type, style, and technology that are best for you depend on your hearing loss, size of ear canal, manual dexterity, communication demands, and lifestyle needs. All of these variables will be discussed with the Audiologist during your appointment in an effort to select the best instrument for your ears.

The cost of the hearing aid(s) includes the following office visits and materials:

Consultation and ear impression(s). The hearing aid(s) will be ordered at this time and will return from the manufacturer in about 2 weeks. A hearing aid fitting appointment will be made.

Hearing aid fitting and orientation. The balance for your hearing aids is due, and a 30-day adjustment period begins. A 2-week follow-up appointment will be made. Your hearing aid fitting will include:

1. Unlimited, free office visits with your Audiologist during the first year.
2. Manufacturer repair warranty and loss & damage coverage (deductible may be applied).
3. One package of batteries per hearing aid.
4. One hearing aid dehumidifier
5. One battery tester
6. One container of hearing aid disinfectant wipes

1-week follow-up consultation. Your experience with your new hearing aid(s) in the “real world” is reviewed with your audiologist. Adjustments to the sound quality and an increase in volume may be performed. A 4-week follow-up is scheduled.

4-week follow-up consultation. Overall benefit with your new hearing aid(s) will be discussed as well as feedback with regard to changes made during your previous visit.

3-month office visit. Hearing aid(s) are cleaned and checked. Continue 3-month visits through 1-year fitting anniversary.

1-year office visit. Hearing aid(s) are cleaned and checked.

Warranty check office visit. The hearing aid(s) are cleaned and checked before the manufacturer’s original warranty expires. The hearing aid(s) may be sent to the manufacturer for a service check within the original warranty. If desired, a warranty extension may be purchased.

Repairs: Many adjustments, shell modifications, and repairs can be done in the office and will be provided without additional charges while your hearing aids are in the first year. There will be no repair charge during the warranty period, although appointments are recommended.