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Where better hearing begins at home!

A Buyer's Guide to Hearing Aids

What the consumer needs to know.

The information contained in this report is intended for educational purpose only
and should not replace the advice from a hearing care professional.



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Hearing Loss- You are not alone



Hearing loss does not just affect you, but those close to you.

If you stop someone on the street and ask them to give you one word they associate with the term "Hearing Loss" there may be a high chance that word is "old." For years the sign of old age in America has been denoted by the use of hearing aids, thus forming it's stigma. Though 1 in 3 Americans aged 65 and older suffer from some degree of hearing loss, about 40% of the nearly 31 million Americans suffering from a hearing impairment are under the age of 65

The prevalence of hearing loss makes it our nation's third most chronic health condition, after arthritis and high blood pressure. Add this to the fact that Baby Boomers will live longer than any previous generation, and you have the largest number of people that will face this problem.

Though hearing loss can happen for a variety of reasons, the main factors that contribute to a hearing impairment are heredity and chronic exposure to loud noises. Unfortunately, you cannot reverse hearing loss. But with such advancements in technology, now you can find a wider variety of discreet options to treat your degree of hearing loss.

How Hearing Aid Technology Works

A hearing aid or hearing device is a small device that can be worn in or behind the ear. It makes sounds louder so that a person who has a hearing loss can listen, communicate and participate more fully in daily activities.

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While 95% of Americans with hearing loss could be successfully treated with hearing aids, only 25% currently use them.

Hearing devices typically have three basic parts: a microphone, an amplifier and a speaker. The microphone receives the sound and converts the sound waves into electrical signals. Those signals move to the amplifier which increases the power of those signals. These elevated electrical signals are then sent to the ear via the speaker.

How do you know if you or someone you love might have a hearing loss?

- Family or friends often repeat themselves
- Trouble hearing the television set at normal volume levels
- Frustration from not clearly understanding others
- Trouble hearing in background noises
- Embarrassment from being unable to hear when meeting new people

If you suspect that you or someone close to you is experiencing hearing difficulty, our report is a good place to start. It is here to answer some of your questions and provide more information about the technology that is currently available. Now is the time to start improving your hearing and your quality of life.

Hearing Aid Styles and Technology

- Hearing aid “technology” refers to the circuitry inside a hearing aid
- “Style” refers to the size and shape

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There are currently five styles: CIC (Completely in the Canal)

These hearing devices are custom made and fit completely in the ear canal. They are almost invisible in the ear and require a small plastic wire or string protruding from your canal in order to remove them.

These seem to be one of the more popular devices on the market today. However, CIC devices are not for those suffering from anything more than a moderate loss. Their small size means they are the least powerful and a higher amount of dexterity is needed to manipulate the small battery.



Due to their small size, the batteries will have to be changed more often than the larger aids. CICs do not have manual controls due to their small size.

ITC (In the Canal)

ITC custom made devices are larger than the CIC but smaller than the ITE hearing devices. The ITC aids can be seen by others, filling roughly half of the canal. Unlike the CIC hearing devices, the ITC aids have a volume wheel. However, similarly, good dexterity to change the battery and to use the volume wheel is a must. This hearing device can be good for people with a mild to moderate-severe hearing loss.



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ITE (In the Ear)

The largest of the custom made hearing devices, the ITE models fit completely in the ear. They tend to be more comfortable than the ITCs and the CICs. Though they are less powerful than the BTE devices, the ITEs are more powerful than the CIC and the ITC.

They are also usually large enough to accommodate other features, such as a directional microphone, telephone switch and can also accommodate a larger amplifier. Their size makes them easier to handle and allows them to be used for a wider range of hearing losses.



BTE (Behind the Ear)

The largest hearing devices on the market today are the BTE aids. These aids have all of their electronics housed in a plastic casing that sits behind the ear. Plastic tubing and a custom made ear mold direct the sound from the aid into the canal. These devices tend to be the most reliable and allow for the strongest amplification. Though these may be seen, they can be hidden by choosing a flesh-toned color.



Open Ear

Open ear or open fit hearing aids are the newest device on the hearing aid market. It is most effective for people who are suffering from a mostly high frequency hearing loss. Essentially, open hearing aids sit on the top or behind your ear. There is typically no ear mold to close up the canal and the tiny clear tube that runs from the device into your ear is near to impossible to see. They are extremely light weight and many users say that after a few minutes of wearing them, they could not feel them at all. Their small size, however, means that the small batteries need to be changed often.



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One Hearing Aid or Two?

If you have hearing loss in both ears (bilateral hearing loss), then you are most likely a candidate for two hearing aids. While a hearing healthcare professional can best determine if you are a candidate for two hearing aids, the ultimate decision-maker concerning binaural instruments is the person who will wear them. It is important that the person with the hearing loss be given the chance to experience binaural (two hearing aids) amplification, before a decision on one or two hearing aids is made. Similar to the way refractory problems in both eyes are treated with a pair of glasses, it makes sense that bilateral hearing loss should be treated with binaural hearing aids.

The Advantages of wearing two hearing aids:

- Better understanding in noisy places
- Better ability to identify direction of sound
- Creates a wider hearing range
- Smoother sound quality
- Better sound identification
- Help create a sense of balance
- Binaural hearing is less tiring and therefore makes listening more pleasant
- Consistent stimulation of the entire auditory system leads to improved understanding of speech.

Research shows that binaural hearing aid fittings give greater speech understanding in difficult listening conditions. Our brains are designed to receive sensory information from two ears. Sounds need to arrive at different times and intensities before we can make sense of the multitude of sound and voices in a crowded room.

Binaural hearing also helps determine where a voice originates from. As it interprets the world, the brain adds together the perception of loudness from both ears. With a single aid, if the sound coming into the ears is unbalanced, the wearer may not be able to determine immediately the location of the speaker.

With hearing aids in both ears, the loudness-summing capability means the volume in each aid does not have to be turned up as high. Less amplification means less unwanted, amplified background noise.

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FAQs Regarding Hearing Aids

What is a digital hearing aid?

The term **DIGITAL** is used so often today, it can be confusing. When the term "digital" is used when referring to hearing aids, it generally means the hearing aid is 100% digital. In other words, the hearing aid is indeed a "complete computer". 100% digital hearing aids have been commercially available since the mid-1990s and they are wonders of modern technology. Digital hearing aids can process sound using incredibly fast speeds. Interestingly, most digital hearing aids have some analog components, such as the microphone and the receiver. These types of hearing aids transform analog information into a digital signal and process the sound to maximize the speech information you want to hear, while minimizing the amplification of sounds you do not want to hear.


Why has the open-fit hearing aid style become so popular?

The quickness and ease of fitting, patient comfort, no "stopped up" feeling while wearing them and the discreet size makes the open-fit style almost invisible when worn.

Though originally designed to fit only high frequency hearing loss, open-fit styles are now even smaller and can fit a wider range of hearing difficulty.

What is the best hearing aid on the market today?

The best hearing aid is the one that suits an individual's unique lifestyle and degree of hearing loss. There are several very good major brands, but there is no single "best hearing aid." At Home Audiology Services, we would be happy to help educate you about the various options and help you select the right model.



The average person waits between 5-7 years after noticing signs of a hearing loss before talking to a professional.

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What features should I look for in a hearing aid?

Typically, most customers are satisfied with the following features:

- **Directional Microphones**

These improve speech understanding in noisy environments by using two microphones to better separate unwanted sounds behind the wearer from the important speech sounds in front of the wearer.

- **Multiple Compression Channels**

These react quickly enough to increase the volume for crucial speech sounds, lower it for louder ambient noises and protect the wearer from sudden loud sounds.

- **Multiple Programs**

These let the wearer change the manner in which the hearing aid processes sound when moving from one environment to another, providing more control over various listening situations

- **Noise Reduction**

This makes listening to speech more comfortable in difficult or noisy situations, as well as reducing wind noise when outside. Noise reduction is available in different levels of technology and can vary in effectiveness. It is important to note that having noise reduction in hearing aids does not mean background noise is eliminated.

- **Feedback Cancellation**

Annoying whistling or squealing are virtually eliminated with this digital feature, allowing for greater clarity of important speech.

Can I use Bluetooth devices with hearing aids?

Yes, some manufacturers now have integrated Bluetooth systems with their hearing aids. It is important to understand that as with any development in high-end technology, some people have found that the Bluetooth and hearing aid pairing work well, while others have been disappointed with its performance. If you are interested in using hearing aids with your Bluetooth phone, computer, television or MP3 player, please call us to discuss your options.

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How much do hearing aids cost?

Hearing aids have a wide price range and almost 90% of our patients are fit with two devices. Pricing depends on the style and technology level recommended for a person's individual hearing loss and lifestyle. This can only be done after a hearing test is completed.

"But I can find hearing aids on auction websites and through promotions on the internet for thousands of dollars off a hearing aid. Aren't these legitimate?"

The hearing aids found through promotions that cost anywhere between \$49.99 and \$300.00 are typically one size fits all. They give poor sound quality and can hurt your ears since they aren't custom fit. If you buy hearing aids through auction sites, you may be able to find some that are known to be good quality, but these hearing aid dispensers do not offer the clinical skills and support an Audiologist would be able to offer you. Also, choosing to buy something you have never seen before might be a problem if you need to return them as auction websites are not required to give you that 45-day period to fully return your hearing aids.



Hear what you have
been missing all
these years

Does my insurance pay for hearing aids?

This is probably the most frequently asked question. Though each insurance company has their own guidelines, most have hearing aid allowances which will cover a percentage (if not all) of the hearing aids. The best way to find out if your insurance company can cover your hearing devices is to call and ask what your policy covers.

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The Next Step- A Hearing Test

The first step to take when considering whether or not to purchase a hearing aid would be to schedule a professional hearing test. By virtue of their graduate education, professional certification and licensure, Audiologists are the most qualified professionals to perform hearing screenings, diagnosing and treating hearing loss and providing hearing rehabilitation services such as hearing aids.

Audiologists have special training in the prevention, diagnosis and non-medical treatment of hearing disorders. Qualifications include: A master's or doctoral degree from an accredited university, state licensure, completion of a full-time internship and passing a demanding competency examination. These professionals belong to several national organizations guided by a Code of Ethics requiring that audiologic services must be provided in an ethical manner.



Though there is no cure for hearing loss, it can be treated easily so you can get back to most important things in life.

What to expect during a hearing evaluation:

1. Your audiologist will spend a few minutes speaking with you to better understand your daily lifestyle, hearing difficulty and communication needs.
2. There will be a thorough examination of your ears. This may reveal excessive cerumen (earwax), eardrum damage or other hearing related conditions. Some hearing problems, like earwax buildup, usually can be resolved quickly and easily.
3. The comprehensive hearing evaluation will then begin and may include pure tone testing, speech understanding and other specialized tests your audiologist may feel are needed.
4. He or She will then discuss the test results with you, explaining the degree and nature of your hearing loss. If a hearing loss is diagnosed, hearing aid options will then be discussed and all questions will be answered.

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Hearing Aid Comparison Chart

Toady's hearing aid choices are greater than ever, but remember- there is not one "best" hearing aid. The following chart is to assist you should you choose to purchase a hearing aid for you or your loved one.

There are comparison charts available all over the internet, but we created one to reflect what our patients typically look for as well as what we consider the top manufacturers out there. Many features used to be reserved only for premium hearing aids, but now many mid-level priced hearing aids now have them as well.

The following definitions will help you navigate through the comparison chart:

- **Open-Fit option**

As noted previously, open-fit hearing aids are miniature, over-the-ear styles with a thin tube that delivers the amplified sound to your ears. Sound can be delivered to the ear canal by a thin tube or by a speaker lying in the ear canal. For the right type of hearing loss, this style delivers a transparent sound without a plugged-up feeling.

- **Listening Programs**

This technology provides different hearing programs for the hearing wearer to select when exposed to various sound environments. Some hearing aids will automatically detect the sound environment, while others will need to be changed manually.

- **Data-Logging**

This unique feature records not only how you use your hearing aids, but it also records your sound environment. This allows you and your audiologist to further customize your hearing aids with objective data.

- **Wireless Communiation**

Over the past year hearing aid manufacturers have begun introducing hearing aids that utilize accessories allowing the user to connect with Bluetooth cell phones, FM systems and MP3-style players.

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Our Comparison Chart

Certain features of past digital hearing aid models such as channels/bands, noise reduction, directional microphones and others are commonplace among virtually all hearing aids made today. Therefore, we have chosen not to include them on the chart. The following chart is inclusive of the most current and popular models our patients inquire about and are wearing. If you would like more information about a particular hearing aid you see or do not see the model you were looking for, please do not hesitate to call our office at 1-631-878-1992 so we can further assist you in your research and questions.

Manufacturer and Model	Open Fit option	# of Listening Programs	Data Logging	Wireless Capability	Manufacturer Warranty
PHONAK					
Exelia Art	Yes	4	Yes	Yes	3 years
Audep YES 3,5,9	Yes	2-4 by Model	Yes	Yes	2-3 years by Model
Versata	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	2 years
MicroPower III, IV, IX	No	1-5 by Model	Yes	No	2 years
Certena	Yes	2	Yes	Yes	2 years
Nadia III, IV, IX	No	Multi	Yes	Yes	2-3 years by model
Una	Yes	4 Manual	Yes	No	1 year
OTICON					
Epoq V, W, XW	Yes	4	Yes	Yes	2 years
Delta 4k,6k,8k	Yes	0	Yes	No	1 or 2 Years
Dual Mini 5,7,9	Yes	1	Yes	No	2 years
Vigo, Vigo Pro	Yes	4	Yes	No	1 or 2 years
Dual Connect XW, W, V	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	2 years
Hit, Hit Pro	Yes	4	Yes	No	1 year

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Manufacturer and Model	Open Fit option	# of Listening Programs	Data Logging	Wireless Capability	Manufacturer Warranty
UNITRON					
Passport	Yes	4	Yes	Yes	2 years
Next E	Yes	2	Yes	Yes	1 year
360, 360+	No	2-3 by model	Yes	No	1-2 years by model
Yuu	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	2 years
Indigo	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	2 years
Next 4,8,16	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	1-2 years
Element 4,8,16	Yes	3	Yes	Yes	1-2 years
SIEMENS					
Pure 700,500,300	Yes	3-5 by model	Yes	Yes	2-3 Years
Centra Active	Yes	3	Yes	No	3 years
Motion 700,500,300	Yes	3-5 by model	Yes	Yes	2-3 years by model
Motion 100	Yes	3	Yes	No	2 years
Nitro + Nitro 16	No	2	Yes	Yes	2-3 years
Life 300,500 & 700	Yes	3-5 by model	Yes	Yes	2-3 years by model
Cielo 2	Yes	2-3	Yes	No	2 years

If you would like more detailed information or do not see a model you are looking for, we can assist you with your research and questions. Please call Home Audiology Services at 1-631-878-1992 and let us help you select the right hearing aid.

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“...The attentive, informed approach of Dr. Beuhler is much appreciated in improving my everyday life. I consider the experience very positively. It has been a winning experience for my wife also. She no longer has to repeat herself to me, and she is much more certain that I truly understand her.”
- John Skaylo

Why Choose Home Audiology Services?

For the past seven years, Home Audiology Services has brought the best hearing care to the greater Moriches and surrounding area. Our commitment to our patients along with the highest quality, personalized customer service makes us a fine choice when moving forward with hearing aids.

The purpose of this guide was to help you answer most of your questions about hearing aids. For more information about a particular hearing aid model or if you are ready to schedule a comprehensive hearing evaluation, please call us at 1-631-878-1992 or email us at info@homeaudiologyservices.com.

At Home Audiology Services it is our job to bring you the best care possible. We make it our mission to go above and beyond your expectations, making you feel like the most important patient of our practice.

**Better hearing is just
a phone call away!
Call us today at 1-631-878-1992**