HEAD & NECK INSTITUTE

Hearing Aid Guide

Achieve a world of better hearing.
Good hearing is part of a full and active life. Let us help you achieve a world of better hearing.

Cleveland Clinic audiologists provide state-of-the-art hearing healthcare.

Our services include:

• Hearing evaluation
• Hearing needs assessment
• Hearing aid fitting, service and repair
• Hearing aid batteries and accessories
• Custom-made ear molds, hearing protection and swim plugs
• Assistive listening devices and alerting devices
Obtaining a Hearing Aid

Obtaining hearing devices involves several appointments described below.

**Step 1: Audiologic evaluation (hearing test)**

The first step is to have your hearing evaluated. An audiologist, a professional who specializes in evaluating and managing hearing loss, will determine the type and degree of your hearing loss and its impact on your ability to communicate.

**Step 2: Medical clearance**

It is in your best health interest to have an evaluation by an ENT specialist to determine if your hearing loss can be medically or surgically treated. For patients over age 18 years, however, the audiologist may determine that you are eligible to sign a medical waiver in lieu of seeing a physician. Individuals 18 years of age or younger must receive medical clearance from a physician, preferably an otologist, prior to the fitting of hearing devices.

**Step 3: Hearing needs assessment**

In this one-hour appointment, the audiologist will discuss the various types of styles, the latest technological advances, and what you can expect from your hearing devices. Together, you and the audiologist will decide which hearing devices are the most appropriate for you, given your individual lifestyle and listening needs.

**Step 4: Hearing device dispensing and orientation**

The fitting appointment, a 1.5-hour appointment, will involve programming the devices to your specific listening needs and verifying the actual physical fit. The proper care, use, and maintenance (including warranty) of the hearing devices will be explained to you. During this visit, you will have time to practice inserting and removing the hearing device, the battery, and learn to manipulate any controls the hearing device may have. You will also be counseled about the importance of using effective communication strategies in conjunction with your hearing devices.

**Step 5: Follow-up hearing device consultation**

A follow-up hearing device consultation is scheduled in the first few weeks following your initial fitting. This visit is important so that your audiologist can answer any questions you may have. The hearing devices may be “fine-tuned” and additional testing may be conducted, if necessary. Remember: it takes time to adjust to your hearing devices. As you learn to listen with your hearing devices, your listening demands may change. For this reason, it is important to return for these follow-up appointments (for which no additional fees exist for the first year) to obtain the maximum benefit from your hearing devices. More than one follow-up visit may be required to fine-tune your hearing devices.

**What can I expect from my hearing devices?**

Unlike eyeglasses, hearing devices cannot provide complete correction for the impairment. No hearing aid will restore your hearing to normal or provide a perfect substitute for normal hearing. The benefits derived from wearing hearing devices, even the most technologically advanced, will vary from person to person. The greatest benefit will be experienced with consistent use of them.

**What hearing devices can do:**

- Hearing devices make sounds louder (amplify sounds) so that you can hear them. The goal is to make soft sounds audible, the sound of normal conversation comfortable, and loud sounds loud, but not too loud.
• Hearing devices improve a person’s ability to understand speech (such as conversations) by amplifying the sounds (such as high-pitched consonants) not audible to the individual. The extent a hearing aid can improve speech understanding will depend on the degree of the person’s hearing loss the listening environment.

• Most hearing devices are quite sophisticated utilizing frequency (pitch) shaping, directional microphones and noise reduction algorithms to enhance communication in difficult listening environments. There are no hearing devices, however, that can completely eliminate troublesome background noise.

• Some of the most advanced hearing device technology offers increased connectivity. That is, Bluetooth telephones and MP3 players can be connected to the hearing aids through wireless technology allowing you to hear these devices while compensating for your hearing loss.

What hearing devices cannot do:

• Hearing devices cannot change how your ears and auditory system function. Hearing devices will not restore your hearing to normal.

• Hearing devices cannot stop the progression of hearing loss.

• Hearing devices cannot distinguish between sounds you want to hear and those you do not want to hear. It is the role of the brain to distinguish and attend to the desirable signals and suppress the other sounds.

Do I need one or two hearing devices?

People with hearing loss in both ears benefit most from wearing a hearing aid in each ear. When we use both ears, sounds are processed by the central auditory system (brain) more efficiently. We are able to locate the source of sounds and understand speech in background noise better with two ears. Less fatigue is experienced at the end of the day because it is easier to listen with both ears. Using hearing aids in both ears allow the auditory system to function more like it did when your hearing was normal.
How much time is involved in obtaining and adjusting to wearing hearing devices?

Expect to return several times for the fitting and fine-tuning of your hearing devices. In addition to the initial follow-up consultation, you should return within the year for a hearing aid check. Based on your listening experiences during the first few months of hearing aid use, you may have questions that need to be addressed, and your hearing devices may require some minor adjustments.

How much does it cost to get hearing devices?

**Hearing needs assessment fee: $100**

This fee is payable at the conclusion of the evaluation, even if you decide not to purchase hearing devices. In most cases, this fee is not covered by your medical insurance.

**Hearing device cost: Price varies**

Remember, hearing devices are an investment in your ability to communicate with family, friends, and business associates. Please be advised that Medicare and most insurance carriers do not pay for hearing devices or associated fees. We encourage you, however, to check with your insurance carrier to determine if hearing devices are a covered expense.

The cost of the hearing aid is determined by the style, size and level of the signal processing technology. The cost of the hearing aid covers all hearing aid follow-up visits for one year following the purchase of your hearing devices. Full payment is required on the day of the hearing device fitting.

What about hearing aid returns and repairs?

After hearing devices are purchased, there is a 30-day right-to-return period for new and undamaged hearing devices. You will receive a refund for the cost of the hearing devices, minus a nonrefundable fitting fee if the devices are returned within that period.

All new hearing devices are covered by at least a one-year warranty for service (some have a two- or three-year warranty). Many also have a loss and damage policy, however, there is a small fee for replacement of hearing devices that are lost or damaged beyond repair. The cost of repairs to hearing devices that are out of warranty will be the responsibility of the patient and range from $200 to $500, depending on the age of the device.

Hearing devices are an investment in your ability to communicate.
What different styles of hearing devices are available?

Hearing devices come in a variety of styles. Each style has its own advantages and limitations. Selecting a style that is right for you depends on a number of factors, including:

- The severity of your hearing loss
- The size and shape of your ear
- Your personal preferences
- How well you can use your fingers and hands (manual dexterity)
- The availability of new hearing device technologies

Several different styles of hearing devices are described below.

**Behind-the-ear**

Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing devices are housed in a curved case that fits neatly and comfortably behind or over your ear. A custom ear mold is made to the exact shape of your ear. People with a wide range of hearing losses, from mild to severe, can be fitted with BTE hearing devices. Because the components are housed outside of the ear, they tend to be the most durable.

**Open-ear**

Open-ear hearing devices are housed in a miniature case that fits over or behind your ear. In most cases, there is no custom piece that fits into your ear canal. The open ear hearing aid consists of a miniature behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing device coupled to an ultra thin tube with a soft rubber tip that fits in the ear. These instruments are appropriate for people with normal to near normal hearing in the low pitches, and a mild to moderately severe hearing loss in the high pitches.

**In-the-ear**

In-the-ear (ITE) hearing devices are custom designed and fit directly into your ear, filling most of the visible portion of your ear. All of the components are housed within a single plastic shell. They have no external wires or tubes. The ITE hearing aid can be used by people who have mild to moderately severe hearing losses.

**In-the-canal**

In-the-canal (ITC) hearing devices are custom designed, smaller in size, and fit more deeply into the ear canal than in-the-ear hearing devices. They are typically less visible than in-the-ear hearing devices. All of the components are housed within a single plastic shell. Because they are smaller in size, however, they can only be used by people who have mild to moderate hearing loss.

**Completely-in-the-canal**

Completely-in-the-canal (CIC) hearing devices are also custom designed. They fit the deepest into the ear canal so they are the least visible. They may also reduce the problem of wind noise and feedback on the telephone. The battery life for this style is rather short because the battery is so small. The aid’s size can also make it difficult to manipulate, particularly for people who have trouble
Call to schedule a comprehensive hearing evaluation with an audiologist.

with finger and hand dexterity (because of arthritis, for example). Additionally, due to exposure to moisture and ear wax, this style of hearing aid tends to require repairs more often and has a shorter overall life expectancy than the other hearing aid styles. The smaller size further limits the technology that can be included in the case, potentially reducing the effectiveness of the device. Some people may not be candidates for CIC hearing devices because of the shape of their ear canal or the severity of their hearing loss.

**CROS/BI-CROS**

CROS/BI-CROS hearing devices are sometimes used when a person has normal hearing or aidable hearing loss in one ear, and very little, if any, usable hearing in the other ear. The hearing aid is worn on the better hearing side and an additional microphone is worn on the unaidable side. This system allows the person to pick up sounds on the poorer side and hear it in the better ear.

A Nationally Ranked Team

The Section of Audiology at Cleveland Clinic is part of a nationally recognized team of specialists. In its annual “America’s Best Hospitals” survey, Cleveland Clinic has been ranked one of the nation’s top otolaryngology programs by U.S. News & World Report.

If you suspect you have a hearing loss, call to schedule a comprehensive hearing evaluation with an audiologist at one of several northeast Ohio locations (listed on back cover).
Making an Appointment

If you would like to set up a consultation with a Cleveland Clinic audiologist, please call one of the locations listed below, or visit clevelandclinic.org/myappointment.

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<th>Hillcrest Hospital</th>
<th>Solon</th>
<th>Westlake</th>
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<td>216.444.6691</td>
<td>440.312.3681</td>
<td>440.519.6950</td>
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<td>Beachwood</td>
<td>Independence</td>
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<td>216.839.3740</td>
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Cleveland Clinic

9500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44195

The Head & Neck Institute is one of 26 institutes at Cleveland Clinic that group multispecialties together to provide collaborative, patient-centered care. A staff of more than 30 physicians cares for adult and pediatric patients with complex ear, nose and throat disorders. The institute, which is one of the largest otolaryngology programs in the U.S., performed the world’s first total laryngeal transplant. Cleveland Clinic is a nonprofit, multispecialty academic medical center. Founded in 1921, it is dedicated to providing quality specialized care and includes an outpatient clinic, a hospital with more than 1,000 staffed beds, an education institute and a research institute.

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