Audicus
GUIDE TO ADDRESSING HEARING LOSS
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WELCOME

Welcome to the Audicus Guide to Addressing Hearing Loss! The hearing aid industry can be overwhelming. Every day there seem to be companies touting the newest, latest and greatest in hearing technology. There are all kinds of technical terms that can confuse even the tech-savvy.

Where do I get a hearing test?

Where is the best place to buy hearing aids?

Which hearing aid is right for me?

Who can I trust?

Thankfully, Audicus is here to answer all these questions and more.

In the following pages, we’ll share everything a prospective hearing aid user should know to make the best decision possible, based on finances, lifestyle and medical needs. Let’s do it!
A Few Facts About Hearing Loss in the U.S.

About 20% of adults in the United States report some degree of hearing loss. That's 48 million.

At age 65, one out of three people has a hearing loss.

Among adults aged 70 and older with hearing loss who could benefit from hearing aids, fewer than one in three has ever used them.

Source: HLAA (Hearing Loss Association of America)
SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS

Straining to hear the television or young children are common signs of hearing loss. Other common signs include:

**Difficulty Understanding Words During Conversation:**
Struggling to hear others speak in quiet settings and asking people to repeat themselves multiple times may indicate hearing loss. Restaurants can be particularly difficult places for someone with hearing loss.

**Difficulty Hearing Loud Sounds:**
Alarm clocks and movie theaters are designed to be loud. Difficulty waking up to an alarm or understanding a movie may point to hearing loss.

**Difficulty Hearing Women and Children:**
Aging people often lose the ability to hear high frequencies first. This translates into difficulty hearing and understanding higher pitched voices like those of women and children.

**Decrease in Extroversion:**
Hearing loss can make social interactions difficult, especially in noisy environments. Avoiding social situations or feeling isolated in groups may indicate hearing loss.
TYPES OF HEARING LOSS

There are three types of hearing loss:

**Sensorineural Hearing Loss:**
This occurs when there is damage to the inner ear or auditory nerve. Sensorineural hearing loss is most commonly associated with aging, usually permanent and typically addressed with hearing aids.

**Conductive Hearing Loss:**
This occurs when sound waves cannot reach the inner ear and may be caused by earwax, fluid buildup or a punctured eardrum. Conductive hearing loss may have treatment options besides hearing aids, such as surgery or medication and will necessitate a visit to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor.

**Mixed Hearing Loss:**
This occurs when someone experiences both sensorineural and conductive hearing loss.
WHAT’S THE NEXT STEP?

Need to know where to get your hearing tested? These places test hearing:

ENT Office:
The ear, nose, and throat (ENT) doctor’s office usually has an audiologist on staff. Call ahead to make an appointment. The test is typically covered by insurance and the doctor is available if a medical examination is required.

Audiologist:
Enter a zip code into ZocDoc to find a local audiology clinic. Call to make an appointment and make sure to request a copy of the hearing test during the visit.

Where NOT to go:
For a hearing test, do not turn to the internet! Although there are plenty of online tests available, keep in mind that these are screenings, only to be used for informational purposes. These tests may not be accurate and cannot replace a professional hearing evaluation.
REQUESTING THE AUDIOGRAM

Always be sure to request a copy of the hearing test (audiogram)–it will be necessary when considering hearing aid options. Patients have a legal right to this document, as it contains personal medical information.

This is what a hearing test should look like:
FREQUENCIES

Frequency, in hertz (Hz), is the unit by which the depth of sound is measured (high or low). Frequency appears on the horizontal axis of the hearing test. The frequencies on a hearing test will range from 125 Hz (low pitched sounds) to 8,000 Hz (high pitched sounds).

High frequency sounds include women’s and children’s voices, while low frequency sounds include men’s voices or a dog’s bark.

The icons on this diagram depict which sounds are heard at different frequencies:
DECIBELS

Decibels (dB) represent the intensity, or loudness, of a sound. On an audiogram, decibels appear on the vertical axis. Zero dB is silence, while 140 dB is the loudness of a jet engine or firecracker.

This graph indicates the categories of hearing loss according to decibel range. For example, normal hearing extends from -10 dB to 20 dB.

To **determine hearing loss range**, locate the lowest point on an audiogram and match it to this graph. For example, if the lowest point falls between 70 dB and 90 dB, it indicates severe hearing loss.
WHICH HEARING AID IS THE RIGHT FIT?

Hearing technology ranges from basic amplifiers to advanced digital hearing aids. Hearing aids come in various styles including: behind-the-ear (BTE), receiver-in-canal (RIC) and completely-in-canal (CIC). To determine the best device for you, keep in mind several factors: degree of hearing loss, ear canal size and dexterity.
Amplifiers are non-medical devices that amplify sound. Though they do contain a microphone, speaker and an amplifier, they are not customized for an individual’s hearing profile. They are not ideal for someone who has hearing loss, but are ideal for those who want slight amplification, such as hunters.
CIC hearing aids sit entirely inside the ear canal and are the most discreet and least visible of all hearing aids. They address mild to moderate hearing loss; for more severe to profound loss, behind-the-ear hearing aids will be the best option.
Behind-the-ear hearing aids with an open fit address mild to severe hearing loss. These hearing aids sit behind the ear—sound travels into the ear canal through a thin, clear tube.

BTE hearing aids are the most popular style of hearing aid and remain discreet due to their small size. Users can typically choose from a variety of colors to match their skin tone or hair color.
RIC: BEHIND-THE-EAR WITH RECEIVER-IN-CANAL

Receiver-in-canal hearing aids are similar to the open fit BTEs, but are more powerful, addressing up to profound hearing loss.

RIC hearing aids function via a wire going through the tube, which connects to a speaker (receiver) in the ear canal.
WHY ARE HEARING AIDS SO EXPENSIVE?

Hearing aid prices are exorbitant and continue to increase. In the last decade, the price of an average BTE hearing aid has more than doubled, while the prices of other electronic devices, like laptops and televisions, have significantly decreased. Manufacturers have allocated substantial resources to making hearing aids smaller, more powerful, and have added features like Bluetooth, wireless integration, remote controls, and 20+ channels.

This is especially concerning in light of how much hearing aids cost to produce: around $200.

How significantly do these new bells and whistles impact the actual quality of the hearing aids?
HEARING AID COST BREAKDOWN

Many argue that devices nowadays are over-engineered for the average user.

Think about it this way: a Rolls Royce can get from point A to point B, but is extravagant due to its added features. A Honda can also travel from A to B in a safe and comfortable manner. When it comes to the hearing aid market, people don’t often have the choice to opt for the Honda and are forced to buy the Rolls Royce. Fortunately, for those with hearing loss, the number of affordable online options has increased.
UNDERSTANDING OPTIONS

Purchasing a hearing aid can feel very overwhelming. What is the difference between each vendor? What does pricing include?

Hearing aids are a pricey purchase, so it’s important to explore different options.

THE LOCAL AUDIOLOGIST

With a local audiologist, customers pay a fee for bundled services. These include the hearing test, hearing aids, fitting, reprogramming, warranty, insurance and follow-up visits. Typically, this costs about $1,500 - $4,000 per device, which means the price of two hearing aids ranges from $3,000 - $8,000. There is usually a trial period with a refund guarantee. Some private practices may have a restocking fee ($100 - $200), so it is wise to ask about this upon the initial visit.
Hearing aids from a wholesale or ‘big box’ store will be cheaper than those from a clinic, generally costing around $1,000 - $2,000 per device. This fee generally covers a hearing test, programming, follow-up appointments, hearing aid cleanings, loss and damage coverage and 10 batteries per aid. These stores typically offer a 60 - 90 day trial period.

Audiology franchises are another option, providing similar services for prices between $1,000 and $3,000 per hearing aid. Some audiology franchises may also charge a restocking fee, so inquire about this.
THE INTERNET

The internet is a fantastic new option for hearing health. Hearing aids offered online generally cost between $400 - $900 per aid, and the technology offered by reputable sites is on par with the technology offered at a traditional clinic.

Costs are unbundled in the online space, meaning customers pay for customized hearing aids, but not for additional services like follow-up visits or a hearing test. By removing overhead costs, like a storefront and clinic, as well as establishing exclusive relationships with manufacturers, online companies are able to offer hearing aids at significantly lower prices.

Online companies have audiologists on staff to program the hearing aids based on a hearing test, the same as what would be done in a clinic. In addition, the hearing aids are customized using differently-sized end pieces and don’t require custom ear molds.
STEPS TO ORDER HEARING AIDS ONLINE

1. Get a hearing test from your local ENT doctor or audiologist

2. Find which of our affordable hearing aids is right for you

3. Get your hearing aid in the mail and try it risk-free for 45 days

Visit www.Audicus.com to start your order!
HEARING AID MAINTENANCE

It pays to care for hearing aids properly to extend their lifetime as much as possible. As hearing aids are in use for much of the day, they are exposed to all types of environments and substances on the skin’s surface.

Following these steps will ensure that the hearing aid remains in good working condition during its five-year lifespan.

Do Away with Dirt:
Hearing aid speakers and receivers can become blocked with particles of dirt. When handling the hearing aid, make sure fingers and hands are clean of any dirt or food residue. If skin is particularly oily, handle the hearing aids with a tissue whenever possible.

Watch the Wax:
The amount of earwax varies from person to person, and it’s important to know how to manage earwax. Be sure to clean the dome/ear mold and/or tube regularly to keep the pathway clear.

Continued on the next page…
Hearing aid maintenance continued…

Mind the Moisture:
Since hearing aids depend on electricity to function, it is important to keep them away from moisture. Remove hearing aids when taking a shower, bathing, swimming or doing water sports.

Better Batteries:
To get the best battery life, deactivate the hearing aid when it is not in use, such as overnight. There is no need to completely remove the battery; simply open the battery door and leave the battery inside.

Smart Storage:
When the hearing aid is not in use, it is very important to store it in a safe location, away from children and pets. It’s a good idea to keep hearing aids in a case, away from dirt, moisture, or damage.

Follow Up Frequently:
Hearing aids need check-ups, too. Make sure to assess hearing aid function from time to time and note any feedback – high-pitched, whistling sounds – coming from the hearing aid while it is in use.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some common questions answered that our customers have had about hearing loss.

Q. *How long do the batteries last?*
   A. Depending on the hearing aid model and frequency of use, batteries can last from one week to two weeks! Most hearing aids take size 312 batteries, which can last up to 200 hours, or two weeks. Others may use size 10 batteries, which can last up to 80 hours, or about one week.

Q. *Could a hearing aid damage my hearing?*
   A. Hearing aids come with safe amplification limits. They are also customized so the amplification on the device is suited especially for the user. If any sounds feel painfully loud or there is discomfort, contact a hearing aid provider for reprogramming.

Q. *Are hearing aids covered by health insurance?*
   A. Insurance plans rarely cover hearing aids. In most cases, Medicare and private insurance plans do not offer reimbursement. In fact, approximately 60 to 70 percent of U.S. patients pay out-of-pocket. The price hurdle is one major reason why 75 percent of Americans with hearing loss do not have hearing aids. However, Medicaid and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) typically do cover hearing aids.

   Continued on the next page...
FAQ continued...

Q. Can I wear glasses with my hearing aid?
   A. It is very common for users to wear glasses and hearing aids. All hearing aid models are compatible with eyeglass frames.

Q. Can I make phone calls while wearing a hearing aid?
   A. Yes, absolutely. Most smart phones come with hearing aid compatible settings that will make phone calls sound better for hearing aid users. Hearing aid users may need to hold the phone at a slightly different angle than usual, but that’s the only difference!

Q. How long do hearing aids last?
   A. On average, hearing aids last five years. Of course, this varies depending upon the level of care and maintenance performed on the device.

Q. What is Bluetooth?
   A. Bluetooth allows the user to wirelessly connect hearing aids to devices like a smart phone, computer, TV, etc. This enables things like videos, music and phone calls to be streamed directly through the hearing aids, like a pair of headphones.

Q. Will hearing aids stop me from living the active life I currently live?
   A. No, many hearing aid users continue to lead active, engaged lifestyles. Though hearing aids may occasionally come loose, they should not hinder any user from pursuing an active lifestyle!
THE BENEFITS OF WEARING HEARING AIDS

Brain Health:
A Johns Hopkins University study published in 2011, examined the possible connection between hearing loss and dementia by analyzing data collected in a longitudinal study. It tracked the overall cognitive abilities (concentration, memory, planning skills, etc.) of nearly 2,000 adults over age 65. It found that after six years, those with hearing loss were 24 percent more likely to exhibit diminished cognitive abilities, than those with normal hearing.

Emotional Health:
The Seniors Research Group conducted a study in 1999 researching the link between hearing loss and depression. Its survey of 2,300 hard of hearing adults aged 50 and above revealed that those who did not treat their hearing loss were more likely to experience depression, anxiety, paranoia, and were less likely to seek out social activities.

Financial Wellbeing:
The Hearing Loss Association of America states that while people in the workplace with the mildest hearing losses show little or no drop in income compared to those with normal hearing, as the hearing loss increases, compensation often decreases.
IN SUMMARY

Untreated hearing loss can lead to decreased cognitive abilities as well as emotional distress. This means those with hearing loss actually have the potential to age their brains and ears faster by putting off the use of hearing aids. Untreated hearing loss may affect productivity and compensation in the workplace, as well as impact relationships.

Hearing aids can be intimidating, but those who are hard of hearing can combat fear by taking control of their health. Armed with all of the content in this e-book, an informed decision for one’s finances, loved ones, and mental and physical health, is well within reach. For further assistance, customer service representatives are ready and eager to answer any questions you may have about the process of purchasing the right hearing aid.

Call us 888-979-6918
or
Visit us www.audicus.com
WHY AUDICUS?

Here at Audicus we want to give everyone access to hearing aids when they need them. We believe that everyone deserves to “Live loudly.”

Traditional providers and manufacturers mark hearing aids up more than 10x to cover overhead and other miscellaneous costs. Remember when we talked about ordering hearing aids online? That’s us! We cut out the middlemen by working with a top-tier, independent German manufacturer and delivering directly to you.

Still not convinced? Try out our hearing aids for yourself for 45 days. If you are not completely satisfied you can send them back to us at zero cost to you.

Call us 888-979-6918
or
Visit us www.audicus.com
SOURCES

www.hearinghealthfoundation.org (Hearing aid statistics)


http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3277836/ (Johns Hopkins Medicine)

http://www.hearingloss.org/ (Hearing Loss Association of America)

Happy Hearing!
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