

Audicus

Audicus E-Book

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Hearing loss

What is hearing loss?

For some, hearing loss renders them unable to hear higher pitches, while for others it means losing low pitches. Hearing loss is also divided into a range of levels based on a person's auditory thresholds or the softest sounds that they are able to hear.

These levels of hearing loss range from moderate (inability to hear lower than 40 - 69 dB) to profound (difficulty in 80+ dB). The natural aging process and sustained exposure to loud sounds are the most common causes of hearing loss. Since every person has their own specific hearing loss, treatment differs depending on the individual. This e-book will walk prospective hearing aid users through everything they need to know in order to find the best hearing aid to treat their needs, lifestyle, and budget.

Why does it matter?

If these signs sound familiar, there is good news. In the US, hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic health condition among the aging, after arthritis and cardiovascular disease. According to the Center of Hearing and Communication, hearing loss affects approximately 48 million Americans and is more prevalent in men than in women.

Check out our helpful blog post to read more about the [effects of untreated hearing loss](#).

Signs of hearing loss

Difficulty understanding words during conversation

Struggling to hear others speak in quiet settings and asking people to repeat themselves 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.

A 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.

Chronic ear infections

Be aware that chronic ear infections can lead to hearing loss, so it's important to seek medical attention if you experience these.

Types of hearing loss

1. **Sensorineural hearing loss** - This occurs when there is damage to the inner ear or auditory nerve. Sensorineural hearing loss is most commonly associated with age-related hearing loss. It is usually permanent and typically addressed with hearing aids.
2. **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. Because this type of hearing loss is more unusual, it will necessitate a visit to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor to ensure that everything is functioning properly inside both ears.

Testing Your Hearing

Audicus offers a streamlined process to test, access, and address your hearing all in one stop with our online hearing test. Below are the three ways to test your hearing.

1. **Take the Audicus Online Hearing Test** - We understand that not everyone has the ability to physically leave their homes, or drive to the closest hearing establishment to test their hearing - that's why we've developed our own hearing test!
2. **Visit an ENT** - The otolaryngologist's, or ear, nose, and throat (ENT) doctor's office usually has an audiologist on staff. Call ahead to make an appointment to get your hearing tested. The test is typically covered by insurance. The doctor is available if a medical examination is required.
3. **Schedule with your local audiologist** - Enter a zip code into www.ZocDoc.com 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.

Tips for your visit

When going to a local provider to test your hearing, there is a very big chance that you will be pitched an overpriced hearing aid. Keep in mind that although you don't have to make a decision on any hearing aid right away, it's your medical right to receive a copy of the hearing

test that was conducted. Your test (audiogram) is a measurement of your hearing loss and can be used by our audiology team to calibrate your hearing aids.

Audicus Online Hearing Test

We understand that many lack insurance, mobility, or easy access to an audiologist or ENT. That's why we've developed our own hearing test.

You can take the test [online directly](#) from the comfort of your home, all you need is a pair of headphones and a quiet space. By ensuring that you're in a quiet environment and focused on the test, your results are going to be accurately used to calibrate your own hearing aids.

Designed and tested over a two-year period by a neuroscience engineer, the test is both accurate and easy to use. Upon detection of any issues, users are provided with straightforward suggestions and information on how to take the next steps.

Best practices

- (1) Make sure you're in a quiet environment.
- (2) Focus on test. It's easy to get distracted and zone out. Be attentive.
- (3) Follow instructions clearly (don't click on test if you didn't hear a sound and vice versa).

Common mistakes

- (1) Taking test in noisy environment with background noise
- (2) Not turning volume to 50%
- (3) Repeatedly tapping on test input to get through it faster

FAQ

- (1) **Is this accurate?** Yes. The test has been designed for us to calibrate hearing aids for you, to help with your unique hearing needs.
- (2) **Can I submit my audiogram?** Yes, we can use a copy of your audiogram to calibrate your hearing aids as well.
- (3) **Do I need anything else to get my hearing aids?** No, we can set up the hearing aids according to the results of your online test and ship them to you to start your trial.
- (4) **Can I take it more than once?** Absolutely! The test is free, and can be taken as many times as you prefer. We will use the most recent test results to calibrate the hearing aids unless specified otherwise.

Removing the Veil

While you research the world of hearing aids, you're going to come across a lot of information that confidently suggests opposing ideas. Keep reading to get some clearer information on what's true, what's plausible, and what's just downright false.

The movers and shakers

As of 2018, there are six big players in the hearing aid landscape, commonly referred to as "The Big 6:"

- (1) Sonova: Phonak, Unitron, **Hansaton** (our chosen manufacturer)
- (2) William Demant: Oticon, Bernafon
- (3) Sivantos: Siemens, Signia, Rexton
- (4) GN: Resound
- (5) Widex
- (6) Starkey

Sonova is the largest of the six, owning more than 20% of the industry's market, and is at the forefront of technological innovations.

Why are most so expensive?

Hearing aid manufacturers produce and sell the devices to distributors at modest prices. However, due to:

- (1) a chain of middlemen the devices travel to get to the customer; and
- (2) markups by local audiologists (overhead costs, salaries, benefits, profit, etc.), prices are almost 15X the manufacturer's cost of the device!.

Available Hearing Aids at Audicus

Dia II

BTE: BEHIND-THE-EAR WITH OPEN FIT

Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids with an open fit address mild to severe hearing loss. These hearing aids sit behind the ear, so that sound travels into the ear canal through a thin, clear tube. These are the most popular style of hearing aid.

Users can choose from a variety of colors. Most people aim to match their skin tone or hair color. Although the devices sit behind the ear, they are barely visible due to their small size (they're roughly the size of an almond).



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RIC: BEHIND-THE-EAR WITH RECEIVER-IN-CANAL TECHNOLOGY

Receiver-in-the-canal (RIC) hearing aids are similar to the open fit BTE model, but are more powerful, addressing moderate to profound hearing loss.

Unlike open fit BTE devices, in which sound travels through a clear tube, RIC hearing aids have a wire going through the tube that connects to a speaker (receiver) in the ear canal.



Hearing Aid Terminology

We know there's a lot of confusing lingo out there clouding your research. The most common terminology you'll come across will have to do with channels, bands, and programs.

Have any questions about the terms you come across? Give us a call at 855.971.0451, or email us at Help@Audicus.com

CHANNELS

The number of **channels** affects how the **hearing aid** operates.

Channels are the routes through which sound enters the hearing aid. The more channels, the better the hearing aid can reproduce or filter a particular sound. More channels allow the hearing aid to separate the received sound into its specific frequency channel, rather than having to group several sounds into the same channel. More channels also allow the hearing aid to automatically adjust to different environments in a more accurate manner. In short, the more channels, the more nuanced sound a hearing aid can produce.

Hearing aid channels are beneficial when the audiologist is able to adjust frequencies that are too loud (keys falling on a table, silverware clanking) without sacrificing the things users want to hear, like a spouse or boss.

BANDS

The number of **bands** affects how the hearing aids are adjusted.

Bands allow the audiologist to make more volume adjustments and finely tune the hearing aid to the wearer's hearing loss and preferences. The bands fall within each channel and are adjusted to compress or expand particular sounds within that particular channel or audio spectrum.

PROGRAMS

Programs are auditory settings usually geared towards specific environmental factors. Example: noisy environments, one-on-one conversation, or music.

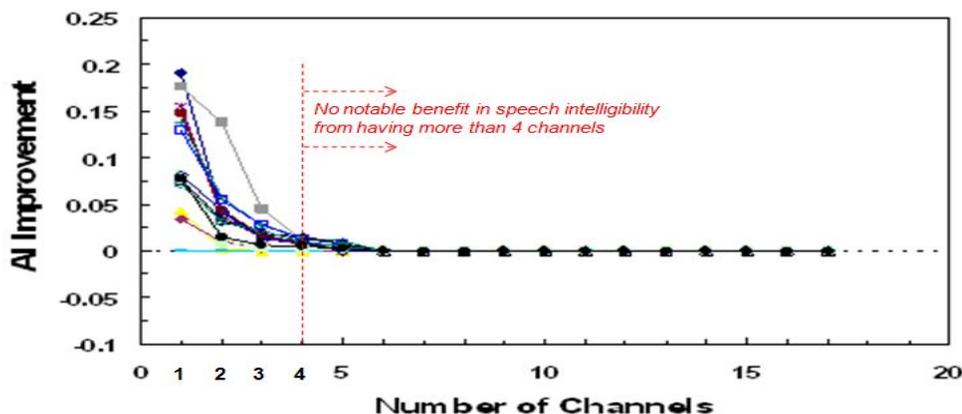
In some hearing aids, programs serve as fixed volume adjustments. These help the user make large jumps in volume through a quick adjustment, rather than having to press the volume control multiple times to reach the same level.

Misconceptions & FAQ

Often times, when doing research into something as personal (and expensive) as hearing aids, you're bound to ask yourself a few recurring questions. We've compiled a list of our top conversation topics among our thousands of Audicus' (now hearing-happy) customers:

(1) Does having more channels and bands automatically make my hearing aids better?

Not really. Starkey did a study involving a sample of 1,156 audiograms to answer how many channels were required to maximize speech audibility. It found that **the perceived benefit in speech audibility beyond four channels is marginal, or "statistically insignificant."** The most drastic improvement occurs when moving from 1 to 2 channel devices, meaning that beyond a certain point, a plateau is reached. The findings suggest that the ideal number of bands may vary depending upon user, but a hearing aid featuring nine channels should accommodate the majority of audiograms.



(2) What's the deal with sound amplifiers? Are they any good?

Not exactly. Sound amplifiers are devices that amplify everything and anything. Which makes it a good accessory if you're going out hunting and have no hearing loss, but not something you'd want to have if you struggle hearing particular frequencies, voices, and sounds.

An [FDA regulated medical hearing aid](#) (like ours), is one that is calibrated and fine tuned for your hearing loss levels by a licensed audiologist, such as our audiology team.

(3) Do I need one or two hearing aids?

Although any audiologist (including our own) would recommend a pair of hearing aids for you (assuming you have symmetrical hearing loss), it's not uncommon to try out one hearing aid to "test the waters" before "diving in." Keep in mind that wearing only one device will not provide the best experience with any hearing aid, as the user will most likely feel out of balance. We often equate this to wearing a monocle versus a pair of glasses when correcting vision.

(4) Does it make sense to purchase hearing aids online?

Why not? The internet has completely overhauled the way the world works, and it was only a matter of time before we (including others) incorporated that into the hearing aid industry.

Yes, at trusted companies. The internet has allowed companies such as Audicus to sell direct to customers at affordable pricing points, without sacrificing on quality.

Although other online providers may not offer calibrating of hearing aids, Audicus offers an in-house audiology team that reviews your test results and calibrates your hearing aids to your results.

(5) How long do hearing aids last?

The life expectancy of any new digital hearing aid is 5-7 years. Like any other electronic device, the lifespan fluctuates on how well you maintain it. If you clean out the devices regularly and replace the accessories on time, we have no doubt that you will get the longest use.

(6) How do I take care of my devices?

Regular maintenance of the hearing aids means you're responsible for replacing the accessories on your devices every 2-3 months. Locally, you may pay a few thousand dollars extra for a couple of years service contract (bundled into your final cost); this will cover the cleaning and replacing of the accessories of your hearing aids.

If you purchase online, you will be replacing the accessories yourself. The average price of domes, tubes, and cleaning utensils is a combined \$20 at Audicus.

(7) Do I really need hearing aids?

Great question. Well, something motivated you to look into this in the first place and begin reading our e-book.

Ask yourself if you have something to actually compare the experience to? In other words, you may have gotten tested and been told you need hearing aids, but feel like that's not something you absolutely need because: "hey, I've been hearing just fine this whole time."

You're not truly able to compare your current hearing levels to the experience of wearing hearing aids, unless you actually give them a try. The advantage you have is that all hearing aid dispensers have to provide you a minimum 30-day trial period.

Audicus offers a 45 day trial, with absolutely no return or restocking fees, so it's a dollar-for-dollar refund back to you.

(8) My audiologist said I absolutely need someone locally, how true is that?

Not that true. Unless your hearing loss is something that requires a cochlear implant (surgically attached hearing aid to your scalp), you probably don't need someone to hold your hand throughout the entire process.

We know our business model works, because we've been growing over the last several years and have thousands of customers worldwide. The trial period is there for your advantage if you're on the fence. With Audicus hearing aids, you will get expert follow up throughout your trial with your designated personal hearing aid specialist to show you the ropes, free adjustments for the life of the devices, and a seamless return if you're not satisfied with them for whatever reason.

(9) They also said I have to come in regularly for adjustments, is this true?

Yes and no. No audiologist (including our own) will set a hearing aid for a new user at 100% power capacity. If we did that, you would have a very uncomfortable time – it would just be too much to handle. For this reason, the audiologist will "ease" your brain into what the device is capable of by having you come back every few weeks for an "adjustment" that's being made; the adjustment being the power of the hearing aid is turned up slightly.

At Audicus, we've enabled our hearing aids to do this themselves with the auto-acclimatization feature that slowly bumps up the power capacity of your hearing aids as you continue to wear them. That's 1 of the main reasons why our readjustment rate amongst our customers is so low (less than 5%).

Audicus and You

Across your research you'll come across a variety of available options, some better priced than others, and some offering more for your money.

Audicus fills a very unique requirement that you may not have realized you need, by offering an affordable option of hearing aids, without sacrificing on quality or human touch.

Mission Statement

Audicus aims to allow everyone that has hearing loss, to live better through better hearing. We're passionate about what we do, as well as our users, because we recognize how important it is to address the medical deficiency of one of our most important senses.

How we help

By offering the same hearing aids that you would find at local boutique hearing aid centers online, Audicus is able to significantly cut down on the costs of employing extensive supply chains, middlemen, and overhead costs that drive up the final price of hearing aids.

Additionally, by including our own audiology team in the process of programming your hearing aids, you're receiving hearing aids customized just for you. It doesn't matter if someone else with very similar hearing loss results as yours tries out your hearing aids, the experience will definitely not be the same.

Expert follow up

With the fundamental understanding that you're looking at us for your first (or maybe even replacement) pair of hearing aids, we know how crucial it is to have a human touch with your experience.

For this reason, we've invested heavily into our customer support team who are trained to answer your questions on not only our hearing aids, but hearing loss in general. Once you receive your hearing aids in the mail, you won't be left in the dark.

You will have assigned your own dedicated account representative who is going to be regularly checking in with you throughout your trial period to go over additional questions that come up, as well as help you with getting used to your new hearing aids.

What now?

Armed with this e-book and its content, you now know more than you did about the hearing aid industry and about Audicus.

We hope this resource will help you proactively find a solution so you can get back to the things that matter most.

Here's what we suggest now:

- (1) Take our [online hearing test](#) (if you haven't already) to get a better idea of what your hearing difficulty looks like.
- (2) Complete the Audicus' Hearing Help Rating Scale, and contact us with your score to receive more insight.