

Hearing Aids

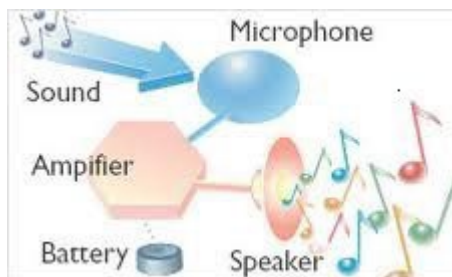
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505.383.6530 Voice/TTY

505.435.9319 Videophone for Sign Language Users

A hearing aid is a device that amplifies and adjusts sound to allow for improved communication. It consists of a microphone which converts sound waves to electrical signals, a processor which amplifies, and shapes the sound, a receiver that converts the signal back to sound, and a battery compartment.



What kinds of hearing aids are there?

Hearing aids come in all different sizes, shapes, and colors. The smallest is a completely in-the-ear hearing aid; the largest is a behind-the-ear hearing aid.



The behind-the-ear or over-the-ear hearing aids and mini behind-the-ear hearing aids can be adjusted for the individual wearing it, and the in-the-ear and in-the-canal hearing aids are custom fit to the wearer.

Hearing aids come with different technology; however, most are now digital. These hearing aids have a microprocessor that analyzes sound and adjusts incoming speech to reduce the interference of background noise. Some have directional technology, noise suppression technology, and may have telecoils (t-coils), or Bluetooth technology, to aid in listening to cell phones, MP3 players, and other media devices.

Make sure the provider:

- Provides a comprehensive hearing evaluation—speech discrimination tests and loudness discomfort level should be included.
- Allows for follow up visits. The manufacturer’s recommended settings don’t work for everyone. Also reviewing information helps the wearer to retain all the information about the device. Adjustments may be needed after exposure to different noise level environments.
- Provides ways for consumers to learn about assistive technology, communication repair strategies, understanding the audiogram, and care of the hearing aid.
- Explains if the hearing aid has a telecoil or Bluetooth technology, and how that technology can assist them in reducing background noise, and how it works with assistive listening devices and loop systems.
- Provides at least a 45 day *supervised* trial period, if the hearing aid is not working for that you, the cost of the hearing aid could be refunded.
- Answers all your questions.

Some things to remember about using hearing aids:

- Don’t expect the hearing aid to make hearing “normal”.
- How much hearing loss a person has is related to how well a person understands amplified speech.
- An older person, in general, needs a higher signal/noise ratio, and therefore may have a more difficult time hearing in noisy environments with a hearing aid. Ask how a hearing aid with a t-coil or Bluetooth technology may help.
- Don’t give up! It might take some time to get used to wearing hearing aids. Report any discomfort to your hearing aid provider.

If you think you might benefit from a hearing aid:

Do not delay in getting an evaluation. Seek out a hearing service provider by visiting an Audiologist or a doctor who is an Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) specialist. They can determine if a hearing aid is what you need or if another approach is more suitable.

It’s ok to shop around. Call and ask questions about the service. Make sure they offer a variety of brands. For interesting information on comparing hearing aid prices, go to:

www.hearingtracker.com/hearing-aid-prices-survey.

If the cost is prohibitive, there are ways to find help. Please see our Fact Sheet on Financial Assistance for Hearing Aids.