

What are the Costs?

The more sophisticated the technology, the more expensive the hearing aid. Costs of hearing aids can range from \$800 each for a conventional hearing aid to more than \$5000 each for a fully digital hearing aid. If a person needs two hearing aids, the cost is doubled. Additional charges may include the cost of an ear examination, hearing aid maintenance and adjustments, the ear mold, batteries and any other related products and services.

Is a Hearing Aid Bad?

No, it is not! A hearing aid is not a health or medical risk. An individual embarrassed by the thought of wearing a hearing aid in public may refuse to purchase or wear one. However, approximately 28 million individuals have a hearing loss in America and the public is very accepting of individuals with hearing loss. America's population is getting older and hearing tends to decline naturally as a person ages. A hearing aid can provide assistance with hearing, understanding speech and can contribute to a better quality of life.

What does a Hearing Aid Do?

Hearing aids do not restore hearing to normal. Hearing aids only make sound louder. They amplify all sounds and do not necessarily clarify specific sounds. A hearing aid is a device that assists a person with a hearing loss to understand speech, environmental sounds and other noises.

What Should You Do?

If you suspect that you have a hearing loss, see your physician to rule out any medical causes. Your physician may refer you to an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist) to evaluate your hearing. Once your hearing loss has been diagnosed, your physician will refer you to an audiologist. The audiologist will evaluate your hearing to determine if and what type of hearing aid is best suited for your needs.

Before Purchasing a Hearing Aid

You should try the hearing aid during the 30-day trial period before purchasing any hearing aid. Do not buy any hearing aid without a 30-day trial period. There are many brands ranging in price that may or may not work for you. Your hearing aid should have a comfortable fit and the controls should be easy for you to handle. You must be satisfied with the sound quality and that the hearing aid works satisfactorily in a variety of situations. You should also determine what kinds of follow-up services are available and the warranty coverage provided for your hearing aid.

Avoid "one size fits all" types of hearing aids commonly seen on television and magazines. Not all hearing losses are alike. One type and brand of hearing aid may work for one individual and not another even when both have a similar hearing loss. You should not feel pressured to buy any particular brand.

HEARING AIDS



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What are the Available Hearing Aid Styles and Mechanisms?

What is a Hearing Aid?

A hearing aid is an electronic, battery-operated device equipped with a tiny microphone that converts sound waves into electrical signals. The electrical signals are made louder by an amplifier that sends the sound directly to the ear through a tiny speaker. Simply put, a hearing aid is a device that makes sounds louder.

The earmold, when fitted properly, is an important part of the hearing aid system. It is attached to the hearing aid and channels the sound directly from the hearing aid into the ear. The earmold is custom made and comes in a variety of materials, textures, sizes and colors. If a hearing aid emits whistles or squealing noises or one experiences irritation and soreness in the ear, it is a sign that the earmold does not fit properly.

Types of Hearing Aids

Hearing aids are available in different sizes, shapes and colors. There are many hearing aid manufacturers. A specific type of hearing aid is chosen to fit an individual's unique needs and tailored to their specific hearing loss.

There are four basic styles of hearing aids:

- **In-the-Ear (ITE)** hearing aids fit completely in the outer ear and are used for mild to severe hearing loss. The case, which holds the components, is made of hard plastic. Children do not usually wear ITE hearing aids because the casings must be replaced as the ear grows.
- **Behind-the-Ear (BTE)** hearing aids are worn behind the ear and are connected to a plastic earmold that fits inside the outer ear. The components are held in a case behind the ear. Sound travels through the earmold into the ear. BTE aids are used by people of all ages for mild to profound hearing loss.
- **Canal Aids** fit into the ear canal and are available in two sizes. The In-the-Canal (ITC) hearing aid is customized to fit the size and shape of the ear canal and is used for mild or moderately severe hearing loss. A Completely-in-Canal (CIC) hearing aid is largely concealed in the ear canal and is used for mild to moderately severe hearing loss. They are not typically recommended for children.
- **Body Aids** are used by people with profound hearing loss. The aid is attached to a belt or a pocket and connected to the ear by a wire. Because of its large size, it is able to incorporate many signal processing options, but it is usually used only when other types of aids cannot be used.

The internal mechanisms of hearing aids vary among devices, even if they are the same style. Three types of circuitry, or electronics, are used:

- **Analog/Adjustable:** An audiologist determines the volume and other specifications needed in the hearing aid, and a laboratory builds the aid to meet those specifications. The audiologist retains some flexibility to make adjustments. This type of circuitry is generally the least expensive.
- **Analog/Programmable:** An audiologist uses a computer to program the hearing aid. The circuitry of analog/programmable hearing aids will accommodate more than one program or setting. If the aid is equipped with a remote control device, the wearer can change the program to accommodate a given listening environment. Analog/programmable circuitry can be used in all types of hearing aids.
- **Digital/Programmable:** An audiologist programs the hearing aid with a computer and can adjust the sound quality and response time on an individual basis. Digital hearing aids use a microphone, receiver, battery, and computer chip. Digital circuitry provides the most flexibility for the audiologist to make adjustments for the hearing aid. Digital circuitry can be used in all types of hearing aids and is typically the most expensive.