

Facts About Hearing Loss

Approximately 36 million Americans suffer from hearing loss.

- More than half of the people with hearing loss are younger than age 65.
- Untreated hearing loss can affect your ability to understand speech and can negatively impact your social and emotional well-being—hearing impairment can decrease your quality of life!
- Hearing loss is the third most common health problem in the United States.
- **Signs you may have a hearing loss:**
 - Difficulty hearing people talk in noisy environments such as a restaurant, shopping mall, in a car, or at the movie theater.
 - People seem to “mumble” all the time.
 - Family, friends, or colleagues often have to repeat themselves when speaking with you.
 - You have trouble hearing people when they are not facing you or are in another room.
 - You have trouble following conversations.
 - You have ringing, buzzing, or hissing sounds in your ears.
- **What causes hearing loss?**
 - Exposure to excessive loud noise.
 - Ear infections, trauma, or ear disease.
 - Damage to the inner ear and ear drum from contact with a foreign object (cotton swabs, bobby pins, etc.) .
 - Illness or certain medications.
 - Deteriorating hearing due to the normal aging process.
- **How to protect your hearing:**
 - Wear hearing protection when around sounds louder than 85 dB for a long period of time. There are different types of hearing protection such as foam earplugs, earmuffs and custom hearing protection devices. Contact your local audiologist for custom hearing protection devices.
 - Turn down the volume when listening to the radio, the TV, MP3 player, or anything through ear buds and headphones. (Visit www.TurnItToTheLeft.com)
 - Walk away from the noise.
 - And, other than hearing protection, do not put anything in your ear!

Hearing Aid FAQs

How do I know if I need a hearing aid?

If you struggle on a daily basis to hear or understand what people around you are saying, or find yourself easily distracted by noise or even ringing in the ears, it is likely that you will benefit from hearing aids. Hearing loss is an 'understanding' problem. Understanding words and sentences is a function of your brain and relies on receiving sound signals unaltered.

Because hearing loss is often a gradual process, you may not be as aware of a problem as are others in your life; friends, family, and coworkers.

Will hearing aids let me hear normally again?

The goal of hearing aids is to improve hearing ability. Expectations for your hearing quality are relative to your idea of "normal" hearing.

Your ears collect sound, transform it into nerve impulses, and send it to the brain where understanding occurs. Most nerve loss in the inner ear occurs with high-pitched softer parts of speech, which give meaning to many of our words. Advanced hearing aids are engineered to help you reclaim a lost sensitivity to many of these higher pitched sounds with the goal to improve your ability to understand.

The audiologist will assist to define realistic goals and expectations for your unique level of hearing loss and type of hearing aid device.

How long can I wait before I absolutely need hearing aids?

The longer you wait to wear hearing aids, the more likely that the auditory system will undergo auditory deprivation – the process of deterioration due to lack of sound stimulation. If a hearing loss is left untreated, the brain may "forget" how to process certain speech sounds over time, leading to a decrease in speech understanding. The type and severity of your hearing loss will help to determine if there is an immediate need for hearing aids.

Do I need to wear two hearing aids?

Generally two-ear assistance is superior to that of a single instrument. If you have a hearing loss that is symmetrical in both ears, two hearing aids are highly recommended. Even in instances

where hearing loss between the ears differ, two hearing aids can provide balanced hearing and better localization of sound that helps separate speech from noise in both ears. The audiologist will make appropriate recommendations based on the results from your evaluation.

I like the hearing aid my friend has. Can I get the same one?

Everyone's hearing loss is different and not everyone can wear the same hearing aid. The appropriate hearing aid for you is the one that suits your type and degree of hearing loss, lifestyle, physical and/or medical needs, and your budget. What works well for someone else may not work well for you. The audiologist will take many factors into consideration to help you choose the most appropriate hearing aid.

Are hearing aids difficult to get used to?

Many years ago hearing instruments were bulky and uncomfortable to wear. Today's advanced hearing aids offer a variety of discrete and comfortable options. Award-winning designs have proven to be aesthetically appealing, naturally comfortable, and virtually unnoticeable.

What is a digital hearing aid?

Most of today's hearing aids incorporate digital audio technology. Digital hearing aids convert sound waves into numerical codes, which include information about a sound's pitch or loudness, and the device is custom-programmed to translate these codes into select amplified sound frequencies. Digital circuitry allows for flexible, dynamic adjustments to the user's unique hearing loss and to different listening environments.

Which type of hearing aid works best?

Hearing aids come in many sizes, styles and performance capabilities. Your individual hearing loss, listening environments, cosmetic concerns, manual dexterity, and budget all factor in finding the best individual solution. The audiologist will guide you through the process and recommend the hearing aid best suited to you and your hearing loss.

How long do hearing aids last?

The lifespan of a hearing aid is typically 3-5 years.

My hearing is getting worse. If I get hearing aids now, won't I just have to replace them later?

With advanced digital technology, an audiologist is able to adjust your prescription and device as needed over time. It's recommended to upgrade your hearing device every 5 years, as technology improves and your listening needs progress.

Is hearing loss just a part of growing old?

While hearing loss is common as we age, there are many factors that can contribute to hearing loss.

- 1) Excessive Noise Exposure (prolonged loud music, firearms, machinery)
- 2) Drug or Treatment Reaction (antibiotics, chemotherapy, radiation)
- 3) Infections
- 4) Head injury
- 5) Genetics

Are there different types of hearing loss?

Most always hearing loss is categorized as either conductive or sensorineural. Most hearing loss is sensorineural and commonly referred to as "nerve loss." A combination of the two types is called a "mixed hearing loss." Unilateral hearing loss affects one ear; bilateral hearing loss affects both ears. Treatment options vary for the different types of hearing loss. Sensorineural hearing loss cannot be corrected by surgery or medication, but may be treated using advanced hearing aid technology.

What is conductive hearing loss?

Conductive hearing loss is caused by a condition or disease that blocks or impedes the movement of sound waves throughout the outer or middle ear. The result is a reduction in loudness or clarity of sound that reaches the inner ear. The treatment for conductive loss can vary and may include surgical intervention depending on the cause.

What is sensorineural hearing loss?

Sensorineural hearing loss results from auditory nerve dysfunction within the inner ear. It is typically irreversible and permanent. It affects the intensity (or loudness) of sound, but more often results in a lack of clarity of sounds, particularly speech. The treatment for sensorineural hearing loss is prescriptive sound amplification through advanced hearing aids.

Why do some hearing aids cost more than others?

As with most technology, hearing aids are priced according to features and performance capabilities. The audiologist will work with you to match the right technology to your lifestyle, listening needs, and budget. At Better Living Audiology, your device purchase includes a 3-year extended product warranty, loss/damage coverage, and follow-up office visits.

Can I exchange my hearing aids if I don't like them?

Better Living Audiology offers a 45 day trial period with all new hearing aid purchases, during which time you may exchange or return the devices.

What will my insurance cover?

Usually insurance will not cover the full cost of hearing aids. However, some insurances will cover a portion of the cost of hearing aids or services. Our staff can assist to contact your insurance company and confirm what your benefits your plan may provide.

What kind of financial assistance options are there?

We offer several convenient payment options, including interest-free financing for up to 18 months. Our staff will review costs and discuss the best options available for you.

Do I need any follow-up care after getting hearing aids?

Yes – hearing loss should be managed over time throughout your life, similar to vision care and dental care. Hearing aids require a period of re-training your hearing. Follow-up visits are always part of your treatment plan. Periodic adjustments may be needed to optimize performance as characteristics of your loss change over time and to accommodate your preferences in various hearing situations. Your hearing aids should also fit comfortably. If you experience changes in your ability to hear or problems with fit, you should call to set an appointment immediately.

How do I care for my hearing aids?

Better Living Audiology provides on site repairs, hearing aid maintenance, and hearing aid cleaning for all our patients. However, the following tips will extend the life of your hearing aid:

- 1) Clean hearing aids as instructed. Ear drainage and wax buildup can damage your hearing aid.
- 2) Avoid hairspray and other hair products while wearing your hearing aids.
- 3) Power off hearing aids when not in use; this will also extend battery life.
- 4) Keep your hearing aids away from moisture and heat.
- 5) Replace dead batteries immediately.
- 6) Store your hearing aids and replacement batteries in a secure location, away from pets and small children.