



Your journey to better hearing

A guide to living a healthy hearing life



Hear better. Live better.

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Hearing is one of the human body's most remarkable senses.

It integrates seamlessly with our brains to help us connect with the world around us. Made up of a complex system of delicate and synchronous parts, it's easy to take this vital sense for granted.

If any of these components aren't working properly, your ability to hear can decline. If you or someone you know would like help, this Better Hearing Guide can be a useful resource.

In it, you'll find out just how common hearing loss is, how help is more advanced and available than ever before, and the steps you can take to ensure hearing loss doesn't get in the way of a healthy and happy life.

Start with a goal

Like most journeys, the journey to better hearing usually begins with the desire to accomplish a goal. In this case, the goal is to finally do something about your hearing loss and stop letting it impact your quality of life.

We say “finally” because unlike eyesight, which people address by getting glasses as soon as it fades, hearing loss tends to be ignored or put off for as long as possible.

The reasons for delay in seeking treatment are as varied as the people who experience hearing loss:

- **The onset of hearing loss is usually gradual** — Making it easier to ignore or go unnoticed.
- **It’s not always recognised for what it is** — Instead, it’s other people talking too softly or mumbling.
- **It’s viewed as inconsequential** — “So what if I can’t hear as well? It’s not hurting anyone but me.”
- **It’s relatively easy to work around** — You can just turn the TV up louder or avoid places where it’s more of a problem.
- **There’s a concern about how hearing aids look and what others will think** — “My hearing isn’t bad enough for hearing aids.”

Once people fully understand the dynamics of hearing loss, the determination to take this fulfilling journey can begin. So let’s start there.



Fact:

On average, people wait 4.8 years between first noticing their hearing loss and finally taking action.²

How hearing loss can impact your life

If you think hearing loss is inconsequential, you should know that studies³ have linked untreated hearing loss to significant issues such as:

- Diminished psychological and overall health
- Impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks
- Reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety
- Avoidance or withdrawal from social situations
- Social rejection and loneliness
- Fatigue, tension, stress and depression
- Irritability, negativism and anger
- Reduced job performance and earning power



Hearing loss affects more than just you

Many people put off treating their hearing loss because they wrongly assume it’s only harming them. However, your hearing loss can directly affect and impact those closest to you, and in turn that can cause:

Frustration: The need to constantly repeat themselves

Misunderstanding: Your withdrawal from people and activities is interpreted as rudeness or disinterest in others

Concern: They worry you’re unable to hear warning sounds like smoke detectors, alarms or sirens

Confusion: If you answer incorrectly, don’t respond at all or relay the wrong information when conversing with them

The connection between health and hearing

Hearing health is directly connected to overall health and well-being. That's been proven, and it means that people who are able to hear can engage with the world around them and live better and healthier lives.

Ever-increasing evidence also shows treatment of hearing loss with hearing aids can improve or limit some serious health issues like cognitive decline and dementia⁴. In fact, a 2017 study revealed that treating hearing loss is the single greatest change a person can make to lower their risk of dementia⁵.

Other research supports that it's a change worth making. Adults with moderate to severe hearing loss are three to five times more likely to develop dementia⁶. And adults with hearing loss can experience a 30 to 40 percent faster rate of cognitive decline than those with normal hearing⁷.

Hearing aids are made so people with hearing loss won't have to miss a single sound that brings them joy. They are made knowing people who hear better, live better.



People with low-frequency hearing loss are considered **at risk** for cardiovascular events.⁸

People with mild hearing loss are

3x more likely

to have a history of falling.⁹



Older adults*

with impaired hearing may have a **shorter lifespan** than their peers without hearing problems.¹⁰

*70 years and older

Over 360 million
of the world's population
have **disabling hearing loss**.¹¹

90-95%
of people with **hearing loss can be treated** with hearing aids.¹²



Adults* with untreated hearing loss

were more likely to report depression, anxiety and paranoia than peers who wore hearing aids.¹³



*50 years and older

There is a significant association between **high blood pressure and untreated hearing loss**.¹⁴



Signs of hearing loss?



Our ability to hear defines who we are and how we communicate. When everything works as it should, our sense of hearing has the power to inform, entertain and connect us with family and friends.

As we grow older, many people begin to experience hearing loss. This is a natural part of the ageing process and develops gradually over time. Already at age 20, we've lost the ability to perceive some of the sounds infants can hear.

By the time we reach 30 or 40, subtle but significant losses have begun to occur. As we continue to live longer, coupled with growing exposure to loud noise from modern lifestyles, hearing impairment is increasingly common at an earlier age.

Even a slight hearing loss can have a negative impact on our ability to work, socialise and enjoy life. Once we reach our 80s, more than half of us suffer from significant hearing loss.

Hearing Loss Checklist

Now that you know more about hearing loss, how do you know if that's what you're experiencing? This quick yes/no quiz might hold the key.

- | YES | NO | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You can hear, but you can't understand. Among the first sounds that "disappear" are high-pitched sounds like women's and children's voices. Also, you mistake similar high-pitched sounds, such as "fifty" and "sixty." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You find yourself complaining that some people mumble or slur their words. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You have difficulty understanding what's being said unless you are facing the speaker. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You are continually asking certain people to repeat words or phrases, though they feel they are speaking loud enough. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You prefer the TV or radio louder than others do. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You have difficulty understanding conversation within a group of people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You avoid group meetings, social occasions, public facilities or family gatherings where listening may be difficult. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You have trouble hearing at the movies, concert halls, houses of worship or other public gatherings — especially where sound sources are at a distance from the listener. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | You experience ringing, hissing, buzzing, whistling, roaring or even chirping noises in your ears. |

> If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then it's time to choose better hearing.

What causes hearing loss?

Aging, ear infections, ear wax, genetics, physical damage, ototoxicity, noise exposure, and some viruses and diseases can all cause hearing loss. Whatever the cause, it doesn't typically happen overnight so it may not be obvious right away.

It's common. Hearing loss affects:

- Nearly 750 million adults worldwide¹⁶
- 500 million people under age 65¹⁶



Seven Signs of Hearing Loss:

- Frequently asking others to repeat themselves
- Turning the TV to a volume others find loud
- Having trouble understanding conversations in noisy places
- Difficulty hearing women and children's voices
- Feeling like others are mumbling
- Avoiding social situations that were once enjoyable
- Being told by others that you have hearing loss



Where to start?

If you think you have hearing loss, the first step is to see a Hearing Professional to confirm it. The good news is that most hearing loss is easily treatable.

Whether you consult with an audiologist, an ENT doctor or a hearing aid specialist, it's important to see someone who specialises in hearing issues.

Only trained hearing professionals have the experience and equipment needed to perform a thorough audiological evaluation and prescribe the solution that best addresses your unique needs.

Tip:

The Better Hearing Institute recommends purchasing hearing aids from Hearing Professionals only.



7 reasons to feel good about seeking help

Research by the Better Hearing Institute¹⁹ concluded that hearing loss treatment is shown to improve:

1. Physical health
2. Emotional stability
3. Sense of control over life events
4. Communication in relationships
5. Intimacy and warmth in family relationships
6. Ease in communication
7. Earning power



What to expect at your first appointment

You take the most difficult step toward improving your hearing when you take the first one — recognising you need to find out more about your hearing loss and improving your situation. Everything after that is easy, including your initial hearing consultation. Most appointments consist of at least these three steps:

1. Hearing analysis

After answering questions to establish your general health and hearing history, you will undergo a thorough hearing examination. First, both ears will be visually examined to see if there are any obstructions in the ear canal that might be affecting your hearing.

Then, you'll be tested with the latest standard-of-care methods and technology to precisely determine the degree and type of hearing loss you have. This quick and painless test consists of listening and reacting to pure tones in a sound treated booth.

Your results will be illustrated in a detailed **audiogram** that your hearing healthcare professional will review with you.

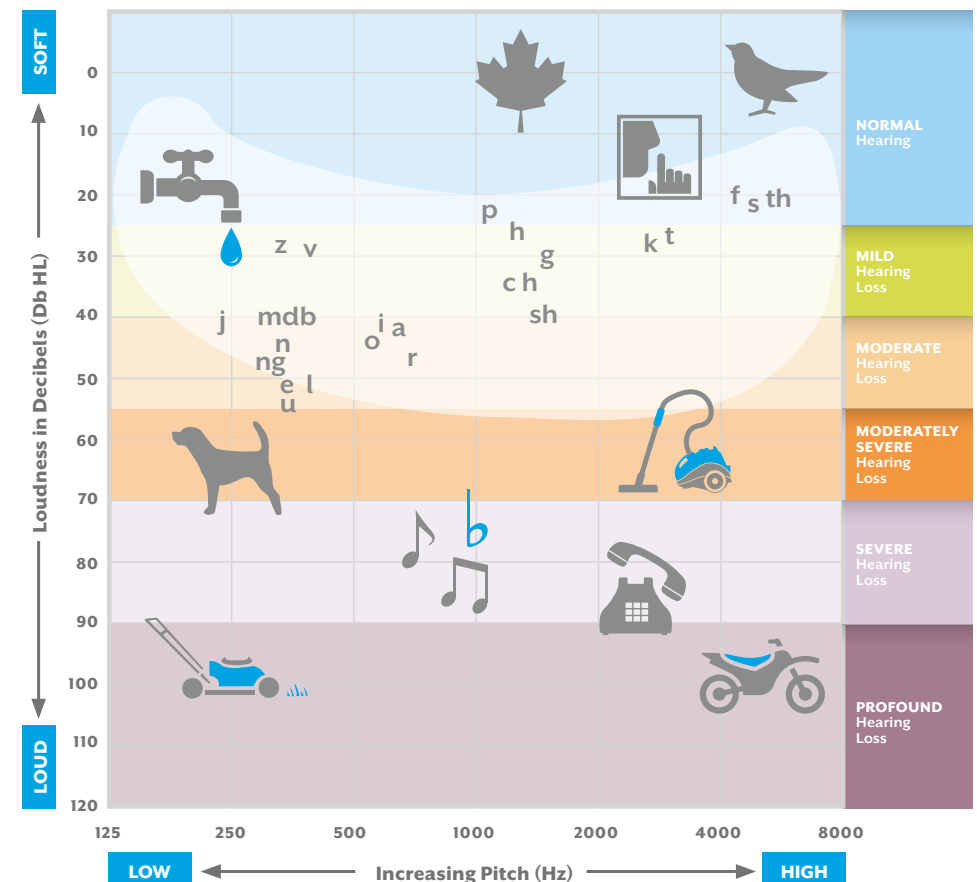
2. Lifestyle discussion

Next will be a lifestyle assessment. In this conversation, you will discuss what you may have stopped doing or how your relationships with family and friends have been impacted by hearing loss. This is an important step — as your answers help ensure that any solution prescribed is customised specifically for your needs.

3. Solution options

Once the evaluation and assessment are complete, the Hearing Professional will explain your solution options. If it's determined that hearing aids can help, you'll get a personalised demonstration of the different instruments that are appropriate for your level of hearing loss as well as your preferences for size, colour and features.

Sample Audiogram



Hearing aids are a smart solution

Today, more than ever, the best solution for many individuals with hearing loss is hearing aids. Like all high-tech devices, hearing aids have improved significantly over the past several years in terms of performance and appearance.

This includes “invisible” solutions that fit deep inside your ear canal and are virtually undetectable when worn, or wireless options that stream audio directly from your TV, radio and phone. Today’s hearing aids sound better, fit more comfortably and perform more reliably than ever before.

Be informed

If your Hearing Professional recommends hearing aids, you’ll want to be ready with questions. So let’s review what you should know about hearing aids.

How hearing aids help

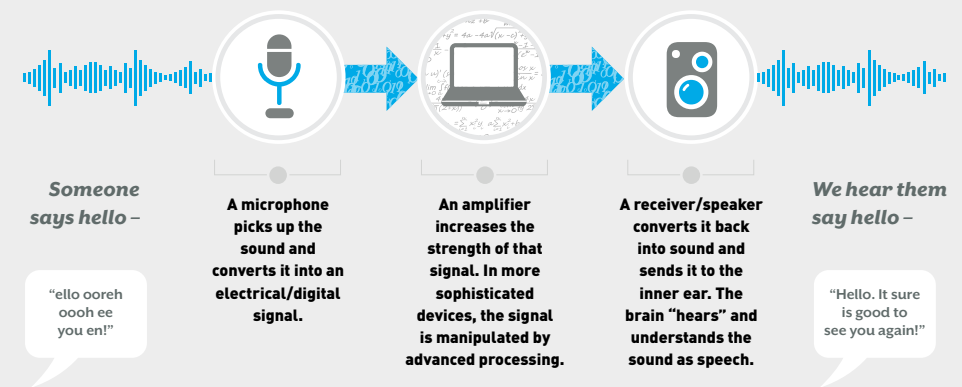
Have you heard negative comments about hearing aids? That’s because the basic premise of hearing aids is to amplify sound. And until the late ‘90s, that’s literally all they did — made everything louder. Today’s hearing aids are designed to do so much more to keep you comfortable and in touch with the world around you.

How do personal sound amplifiers (PSAPs) differ from hearing aids?

There is a difference between basic amplification products and hearing aids. PSAPs, typically stripped of sound enhancement features, are rudimentary devices similar to old analogue hearing aids that only make sounds louder. Although both hearing aids and PSAPs improve the ability to hear sound, hearing aids are designed to improve each individual’s hearing even in difficult situations. With advanced technology features like wireless streaming and body and brain health tracking, the gap between hearing aids and PSAPs becomes even wider.



How do hearing aids work?



Advanced features

Today's hearing aids still amplify sounds, but thanks to advances in technology, they're much smarter and more selective in what they amplify. Here are some of the benefits that cutting-edge technologies provide.

Hear comfortably in challenging environments

One of the biggest challenges people with hearing loss have is hearing in busy places like restaurants or social gatherings. It's not that they can't hear, it's that they can't hear clearly. It's all one muddled mass of sound — and the voices of the people they're with don't stand out.

Advanced noise reduction technology provides enhanced clarity of speech and is designed to be effective in even the noisiest environments, comfortable in loud settings and quiet in quiet settings.

Works with your smartphone

Advanced hearing aids work seamlessly with your favourite digital devices and wireless accessories to help you connect to your world. You can stream phone calls, music and more directly from your smartphone to your hearing aids.

Universal connectivity with wireless accessories

Wireless hearing aids enable more reliable connections between hearing aids and digital devices. With wireless accessories you can directly stream TV, music and more to your hearing aids – with carefree, hands-free connectivity and control. No worn device is required. This direct connection makes you feel more present in your environment, and you can hear at the volume you want without having to listen to loud or harmful sounds.

Hearing aids with artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence is the development of computer systems that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. Using artificial intelligence in hearing aids helps optimise the experience with features such as body and brain tracking, fall detection, language translation, remote programming and much more.



Invisible devices

New technologies are making it possible to fit all these advanced hearing solutions into smaller and smaller products. Some of today's hearing aids are so tiny they rest completely in your ear canal, so they are virtually undetectable when worn.

Now, thanks to breakthrough technology, hearing aids provide the most natural hearing experience in the most complex environments.

Hearing instrument styles

Hearing instruments come in a variety of styles. your Hearing Professional will recommend one or more types based on factors such as your level of hearing loss, cosmetic preferences, lifestyle needs and budget. Most Behind-The-Ear and Receiver-In-Canal styles come in a range of colours and metallic finishes to complement your hair and skin tone.



IIC
INVISIBLE-IN-THE-CANAL

INVISIBLE IN THE CANAL (IIC)

The newest custom fit style is virtually invisible when worn. Living in the second bend of the ear, the IIC comes complete with the world's industry-leading technology.



CIC
COMPLETELY-IN-THE-CANAL

COMPLETELY IN THE CANAL (CIC)

These devices fit completely in the ear canal. Only the head of a tiny plastic line - with which you insert or remove the instrument - shows above the canal.



ITC
IN-THE-CANAL

IN THE CANAL (ITC)

ITC instruments feature a custom earmould that fits down the ear canal and a small portion that faces out into the outer ear.



ITE
IN-THE-EAR

IN THE EAR (ITE)

ITE instruments house the technology components in a custom earmould that fits within the outer portion of the ear.



RIC
RECEIVER-IN-CANAL

RECEIVER IN CANAL Absolute Power (RIC AP) RECEIVER IN CANAL (RIC) MICRO RECEIVER IN CANAL (MicroRIC)

The RIC AP combines a custom earmould with a sleek RIC instrument allowing people with even the most severe hearing loss to enjoy style without sacrificing power and performance.

The RIC and Micro RIC devices are small, discreet and incredibly quick to fit; perfect for many first-time wearers.



RIC
MICRO RECEIVER-IN-CANAL



MINI BTE
MINI BEHIND-THE-EAR

MINI BEHIND THE EAR (miniBTE)

The mini BTE rests behind the ear. The case at the back of the ear houses the technology, while a clear tube then directs amplified sound into the ear canal via a custom earmould or earbud.



BTE
BEHIND-THE-EAR

BEHIND THE EAR (BTE)

BTE instruments' technology is housed in a casing that rests behind the ear. A clear plastic tube then directs amplified sound into an earmould inside the ear.



RECHARGEABLE

RECHARGEABLE HEARING INSTRUMENTS

Enjoy continuous, stable use throughout your day with a rechargeable battery option.

The question everyone asks

One of the first things first-time hearing aid buyers want to know is “How much is a pair going to cost?” The answer is, “It depends on what you need.” In other words — people have different hearing needs, not all hearing aids are alike, and not all service packages are the same.

When considered along with other quality-of-life items that you pay for monthly (for instance, mobile phones, satellite TV or even coffee), the financial investment is very comparable and definitely worth it.

Remember, too, that hearing aids are highly sophisticated medical devices fitted by educated and trained professionals, and typically include additional benefits and services like follow-up visits, repairs and counselling.

There's a range for a reason

Like many things you buy — from televisions to mobile phones to glasses — there is a wide range of pricing that applies to hearing aids. They're available in a variety of styles, with a range of high-tech features, which means you'll typically pay less for big and basic than you will for hearing aids that are little and loaded.

Features that cancel noise, eliminate feedback, improve high-frequency audibility and enable direct connectivity to phones, TVs and music greatly improve performance and enhance everyday listening, but also increase costs. Insurance coverage varies based upon your plan. Check with your insurance provider to determine your benefits. For details on pricing and financing options, talk to your Hearing Professional.



Adjusting to a better life with hearing instruments

Choosing a hearing device is just the beginning of the journey to better hearing. How quickly you adjust to your hearing instruments depends on how often you wear them. When you first start using your hearing instrument, you will notice an increase in the noise levels around you. This background noise has probably always been there, but with your hearing loss, you might not have noticed these sounds.

It may take a while to get used to hearing sounds being louder than before. As with anything new, it will take time and patience as you adapt to this new way of hearing.

Hearing is only part of how we exchange thoughts, ideas and feelings. Reading lips, facial expressions and gestures can enhance the learning process and supplement what amplification alone may miss. The continued understanding and support of family and friends are crucial as you pursue improved hearing.

The following steps can make communicating easier when you are adjusting to a new hearing device.

- Looking at the person who is speaking and sitting face-to-face in a quiet room
- Minimising distractions; for example, doing dishes at the sink and trying to have a conversation is difficult even for those with normal hearing
- Moving closer to the speaker and within sight
- Trying different locations in a room that has poor acoustics



When you use your instruments for the first time, you'll notice that the hearing process feels different. That's because your brain actually has to relearn how to hear sounds - especially the complex range of frequencies in human speech.

This period of adjustment is completely normal. But before long you'll start hearing the sounds you've been missing as well as many you didn't even realise were gone. You might begin to notice sounds you haven't heard for some time, such as the hum of household appliances, or the subtle sounds of nature.

Research suggests that speech comprehension increases over a period of several months after first using a hearing instrument. The longer you wear the device, the clearer and more natural these sounds will become.

There's so much in life that's worth hearing. Spending time adjusting time to your hearing aid is a valuable process which will ultimately allow you to make sure you can appreciate every single sound and enjoy hearing again.

The following are observations made by first-time hearing aid wearers:

- It takes time to adjust to wearing hearing instruments
- Your voice may sound different at first
- Hearing in situations with background noise should improve, but probably not as much as hearing in quiet places

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