

HearingLife

Guide to Better Hearing & Hearing Aids



 **HearingLife**

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Welcome Letter

Thank you for requesting HearingLife's Guide to Hearing & Hearing aids.

Hearing loss and hearing aids tend to be topics that most people have limited knowledge about so we want to ensure that you have all the information you might need to make the best informed decisions possible regarding your hearing healthcare. In support of this goal, we have compiled this booklet for you containing this basic information.

We trust this will answer many of your questions, but if you do require additional information please contact your local HearingLife location. After all, we are your hearing aid experts for life!

Sincerely,



Jillian Price,
National Chief Audiologist



Jillian Price,
National Chief
Audiologist

Hearing & Hearing Loss

Hearing loss affects more than 10% of all Canadians and, more significantly, 50% of those who are over the age of 65.

Did you know that hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic health problem in Canada? Hearing loss will affect the majority of people at some point in their lives.

However there still remains a large gap between the number of Canadians who suffer from a treatable hearing loss and those who actually wear hearing aids. Even though hearing aids **can help 95 out of 100** individuals who have experienced a loss of hearing, **less than 20%** of these Canadians who suffer from hearing loss choose to wear hearing aids.

Degree of Hearing Loss

Mild Hearing Loss – People who have a mild hearing loss will encounter some difficulties in keeping up with conversations, especially in noisy surroundings, and will experience diminished clarity of speech and understanding.

Moderate Hearing Loss – Individuals who have a moderate hearing loss will experience an increased degree of difficulty following and engaging in conversations, even in quiet environments.

Severe Hearing Loss – People who suffer from a severe hearing loss will be unable to hear conversations and speech in quiet situations and will typically have to rely heavily on facial and body cues to follow a conversation.

Profound Hearing Loss – Individuals who suffer with a profound hearing loss have difficulty hearing in most situations and are unable to hear speech and critically important sounds while walking or driving in traffic or fire and alarm bells.

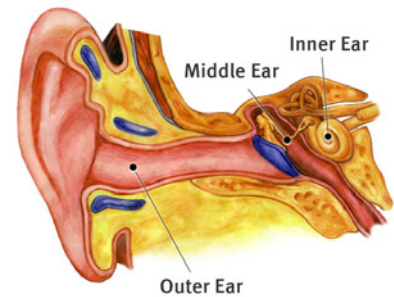
All levels of hearing loss can be successfully treated by wearing hearing aids.

Even clients with a mild hearing loss report a noticeable improvement in the clarity of speech and understanding, and a significant decrease in the effort it takes to follow and participate in conversations.

To better understand hearing loss, it is important to know how your ears work.

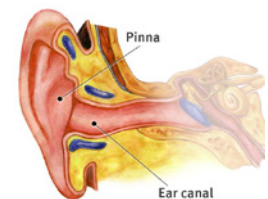
How Your Ears Work

Our ears are an incredibly complex and efficient system. There are three main parts and each one has a specific and essential role in hearing.



Outer Ear:

- Pinna – collects sound.
- Ear Canal – produces wax (cerumen) which traps debris.



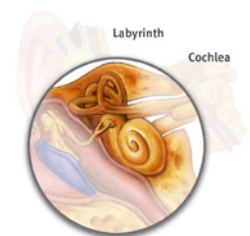
Middle Ear:

- Eardrum – separates the outer ear from the middle ear.
- Middle Ear Cavity – air-filled space behind the eardrum and houses three bones. These bones are attached to each other and when the eardrum moves, the bones move in concert with each other.



Inner Ear:

- Cochlea – shaped like a snail, the cochlea contains tiny hair cells that bend when sound enters, and this activity sends a message to your brain to receive and process the sound.



Types of Hearing Loss

When your hearing healthcare professional conducts your hearing check up and assessment, we will determine the origins of your particular hearing loss... it's why's and wherefore's.

Conductive Hearing Loss: This occurs when the sound cannot get through to the inner ear. Common causes of this are fluid in the middle ear space, a hole in the ear drum or wax blocking the ear canal (there are many others, but these are the most common). This type of hearing loss can sometimes be treated through a medical intervention.

Sensorineural Hearing Loss: This type of hearing loss occurs when the hair cells in the cochlea have been permanently damaged. This is often a result of aging and/or noise-induced hearing loss and can also occur due to a medical condition. This type of hearing loss is almost always permanent and irreversible, but it can be treated effectively by wearing hearing aids.

Mixed Hearing Loss: This results when both a conductive and sensorineural hearing loss occur together.

If your hearing loss can be treated by a medical intervention of some kind we will refer you back to your physician for the appropriate treatment. If it cannot, your hearing healthcare professional will recommend and prescribe a set of hearing aids.

What happens when you live with untreated hearing loss?

Hearing loss is the third-leading chronic health problem in Canada. There are several possible consequences of living with untreated hearing loss. For example, you may:

- Find yourself withdrawing from social events and situations;
- Experience undue stress, anxiety and/or depression;
- Have difficulty communicating with family, friends and co-workers;
- Be embarrassed in certain situations, by misunderstanding what your colleagues or clients at work are saying;
- Put yourself in danger by misunderstanding your doctor's medical instructions, or not hearing an emergency vehicle in time while in traffic or crossing an intersection;
- Put yourself at risk of a further and more serious loss of your ability to hear. When someone decides to continue living with untreated hearing loss, their ability to understand speech declines at a faster rate than if they'd been wearing hearing aids. In other words... if you don't use it, you may lose it!



But there is good news! These consequences can be avoided or minimized by wearing hearing aids.

What happens when you live with untreated hearing loss? (cont'd)

Take a moment and think about what it would mean to you and your family if you could:

- Hear much better and understand so much more;
- Laugh with and get closer to the people you love;
- Feel relaxed rather than drained after a long conversation;
- No longer be embarrassed by misunderstandings or having to ask people to repeat themselves;
- Listen to the TV or radio at a volume that suits you and everyone else;
- Keep up and participate equally in meetings and conversations;
- Be less stressed, avoid anxiety and no longer be depressed.



Wearing a set of hearing aid instruments can do this... and more!

We often hear the following comment from clients after they've been fitted with of a new set of hearing aids: "If I had known how much better I could hear with hearing aids, I would have gotten them a long time ago!"

True or False?

1. Your hearing can be improved.

TRUE! Nearly 95% of people with sensorineural hearing loss can be helped by wearing hearing aids.

2. Hearing loss only affects “old people” and is merely a sign of aging.

FALSE! Less than 40% of the total number of people with hearing loss are over the age of 65. In Canada, there are close to 1.3 million people with hearing loss between the ages of 18-45.

3. If I had a hearing loss, my family doctor would have told me.

NOT NECESSARILY! Only 14% of physicians routinely screen for hearing loss during an annual physical examination. Since most people with hearing loss can still comprehend speech and communicate relatively well in a quiet environment like a doctor’s office, it’s virtually impossible for your physician to detect that you may have a problem with your hearing, or to determine whether it’s serious or not.

4. A hearing loss is more noticeable to others around you than it is to wear hearing aids.

TRUE! It’s difficult to continually hide the fact that you are misinterpreting words or repeatedly questioning what has been said and asking others to repeat themselves. Living with an untreated hearing loss means that you will be missing out on conversations, social interactions and a variety of sounds such as music. This usually leads to feelings of frustration, stress, anxiety and even depression. Today’s modern hearing aids are so discrete that most times they go completely un-noticed by others.

5. You should wait until hearing aid technology significantly improves.

FALSE! With the shift from using analog technology to digital technology that occurred over seven years ago, hearing aid technology and features have improved dramatically. The vast majority of hearing aids now take full advantage of digital technology which means that they automatically amplify the sounds you want to hear, while reducing background noise. Therefore speech is significantly clearer and the sounds of music become far richer. Plus, with the trend to miniaturization, today’s hearing aids are tinier, much more discreet (i.e. hard for others to notice when you’re wearing them) and more user-friendly than ever before.

6. I can manage fine by wearing just one hearing aid.

NOT NECESSARILY! 95% of those who experience hearing loss will benefit greatly from wearing two hearing aids. This makes for properly balanced hearing (so you can detect where sounds are coming from) and more comfortable and effective communications in all everyday situations.

What to Expect During Your HearingLife Hearing Test

Making your appointment to seek information and help is the most important step on your way to better hearing.

Initial appointments at HearingLife will take up to one hour so please be sure you allow enough time. We also encourage you to bring your spouse, a family member or friend with you to your appointment, since you may find it helpful to have someone with you who has a familiar voice!

Communication

Please arrive at least 10 minutes early for your first appointment. Upon your arrival at our clinic, you will be asked to fill out a hearing history form. This will then be reviewed with you by your hearing healthcare professional. If you need help filling out this form simply ask us for assistance.

The history form will give us a better understanding of your history with hearing and communication problems and your concerns. It's important for us to be aware of any history of extended exposure to loud noises you may have experienced, any communication problems you are having, and if you have any medically relevant issues such as tinnitus or dizziness. We'd also like to better understand your thoughts and feelings about the challenges you have due to your loss of hearing, how this condition affects your life and what your expectations might be concerning possible treatment options. If you already have hearing aids please bring them with you, even if you are not currently using them.

Preliminary Examination

Prior to assessing your hearing, your hearing professional will perform a simple, non-invasive examination of your ears for any obvious physical conditions that might be cause for further medical evaluation, such as excessive ear wax, and blockages or problems with your ear canal or eardrum.



What to Expect During Your HearingLife Hearing Test (cont'd)

Hearing Assessment

Based on the results of your preliminary examination, your hearing professional will then perform a variety of hearing tests that will be conducted while you are seated in a sound booth. In this enclosed environment, you'll be asked to respond to a range of tones, words and other stimuli so that we can properly assess your hearing capabilities. For some tests, you will sit quietly while for other tests you will be asked to respond to sounds that are played for you at different volumes and pitches. You will also be asked to repeat back words. Following the hearing assessment, your hearing healthcare professional will take the time to carefully explain to you the results of your test, the implications of it and will also show you in chart form – called an audiogram - how your hearing compares with a normal range of hearing.

Recommendations

Based on the results of your hearing assessment, your hearing professional will recommend what we believe to be the most appropriate course of treatment.

Hearing Aids

If we recommend that you wear hearing aids, your hearing healthcare professional will guide you in making the most appropriate choice that best suits your needs and budget. There is a wide range of options and styles available and hearing instruments come in a variety of sizes, models and price points. With guidance from your hearing healthcare professional, you will also select which style of hearing aids work best for your communication and lifestyle needs. And rest assured that we'll take whatever time is needed to fully answer any questions you may have.

Prior to coming in for your appointment, you should also check with your private or company health insurance plans to determine if you have coverage for hearing aids.

Your custom hearing aids will be ready for pick up within two weeks of ordering.

Questions

If you have any questions prior to your appointment, please call your local HearingLife hearing healthcare centre or **1-877-877-1403**. If you have specific concerns or questions about your hearing, please remember to make notes of them prior to coming in for your appointment.

Hearing Aids

What are hearing aids?

Hearing aids are battery-powered, electronic devices that consist of a microphone, an amplifier and a receiver which serve to reproduce sounds that are clearer and loud enough in order to improve your hearing.

What are the different styles of hearing aids?



Open-Behind-the-Ear: Suitable for mild to severe hearing loss, this is our most popular style and is more cosmetically discreet than behind-the-ear models. It rests behind the ear and transmits sound via a thin tube.



Behind-the-Ear: Suitable for mild to profound hearing loss, this style also rests behind the ear and transmits sound via a tube.



Completely-in-the-Canal: Suitable for mild to moderate hearing loss, this style is typically the smallest and rests deep within the ear canal. These are commonly referred to as “invisible” hearing aids.



In-the-Canal: Suitable for the mild to moderately severe hearing loss, this style rests in the ear canal.



In-the-Ear: Suitable for mild to severe hearing loss, this style fills the outer ear cavity.

Hearing Aids (cont'd)

Which style is right for you?

There are a variety of factors that influence a person's choice of style for hearing aids:

- Physical factors, such as the shape of your ear;
- Hearing-related factors, such as the type or degree of your hearing loss;
- Personal preferences; and
- Cost.

At your appointment, we will show you all the options available both in terms of size, style and price. We will be pleased to work with you to select the device that is most suited to your hearing levels, your budget and your lifestyle.

Hearing aids at HearingLife come with our exclusive **Expert Care Guarantee** which includes everything you need for three full years, including the batteries, full warranty, and 90 day return or exchange privilege, plus our assurance that you'll get the best value.



Technology

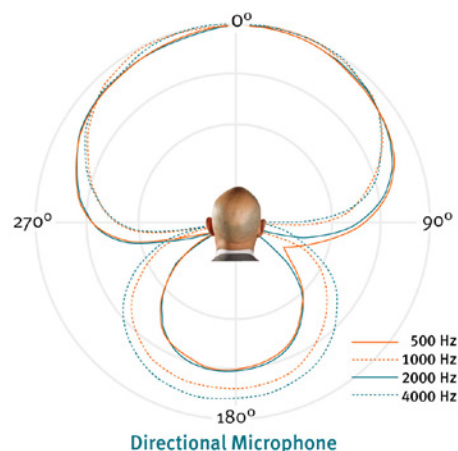
Digital hearing aids deliver the most advanced technology available in the hearing aid market today.

They offer more flexibility, more options, and better sound quality compared with other types of hearing aids. Almost all hearing aids we prescribe use digital technology.

Hearing Aid Features

The number and type of features in a hearing aid determine the level of technology. Advanced hearing aids have more sophisticated features than basic models. The primary features include:

Directional Microphone Systems give preference to sounds coming from the front of the user and reduces sounds coming from other directions. This improves understanding of speech in situations with background noise, such as when you are facing someone that you're talking with and your back is to a noisy environment, such as in a crowded restaurant. Advanced instruments are able to do this automatically while basic instruments may require a button to be pushed to activate this feature.



Noise Reduction smoothes out loud and intermittent sounds, such as dishes rattling, car keys jingling, or noises from typing on a keyboard, and is designed to improve listening ease and comfort.

Wind Noise Reduction is for users who spend a lot of time outdoors – golfers, boaters, walkers etc. Wind noise reduction reduces the “whooshing” sounds that come from wind blowing across the hearing aid microphone(s) and is designed to improve listening ease and comfort.

Feedback Management is designed to reduce or eliminate the whistling effects that can sometimes occur with hearing aids. Advanced instruments reduce or eliminate feedback electronically with little or no effect on the overall sound while basic instruments suppress the volume of sound/amplification to eliminate whistling.

Bluetooth Connectivity is designed to enhance your hearing ability when using other electronic devices. It allows you to wirelessly connect your hearing aids to your home phone or mobile phone, and also to devices such as your TV, Personal Computer or music player so that the sounds are transmitted directly to both of your ears through your hearing aids.

Cost

The cost of a hearing aid can vary widely and is based on the extent of your hearing loss, the brand and model of device that you select, and your eligibility for any available government and private funding programs.

There are several funding programs available to residents of Canada that provide financial assistance toward the purchase of hearing aids including the **Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA)**, the **Non-Insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit (NIHB)**, and your provincial **Workplace Health and Safety Board**. We will assist you in applying for the funding programs for which you qualify. HearingLife also offers a variety of no-interest financing programs to further assist clients with their purchases.

It's also important to remember that at HearingLife, your hearing aids come with our unique **Expert Care Guarantee** already included in the price. This feature gives you everything you need for three full years, including the batteries, full warranty (no repair costs), and 90 day return or exchange privilege, plus our assurance that you'll get the best value.



Two Ears Are Better Than One!

“Do I really need two hearing aids?” is a question we sometimes hear from our clients.

If your hearing loss has decreased to a level where you could benefit from a hearing aid **in each ear**, then the resounding answer is “YES, you really do need two hearing aids!” And this is true for 95% of individuals with a hearing loss.

- You need both ears to function at your full potential and to hear your best;
- Balanced hearing makes it easier to have conversations in all situations;
- It's a safety issue... you need to be able to hear where sounds, such as fire alarms, cars honking and emergency vehicles, are coming from.



Most individuals with a treatable hearing loss can benefit greatly from wearing two hearing aids. This delivers more balanced hearing and effective and comfortable communications in all everyday situations. For example, when wearing two hearing aids you'll achieve better hearing in noisy situations, avoid further deterioration of hearing in the ear that doesn't have a hearing aid, and you'll enjoy a fuller, clearer and more comfortable sound. It just makes life easier!

Your Next Steps

1. Call **1-877-877-1403** to schedule your complimentary hearing test.
2. Jot down any questions you may have... we're here to give you all of the information you need!
3. Review page 4, "What to Expect" and try your best to bring a friend or loved one with you to your appointment because it may assist you in the hearing check up process. Also remember to verify whether you have any additional insurance coverage ahead of time.

See you soon!

