


# Your hearing illuminated

Preparing for your  
hearing consultation







## Rediscover your hearing and reconnect with the important things you might have been missing

Your sense of hearing is a vital link to your world – a source of pleasure, information and communication. A hearing assessment by a qualified hearing care professional is an important step in learning more about your hearing capabilities. If you are noticing some hearing difficulties, there is something you can do to take control of the situation. After all, communication is so important in life, so why compromise?

# About your hearing consultation

If you have never visited a hearing care professional you probably don't know what to expect. You are in for a pleasant experience that is interesting, informative, and a great start on your path to better hearing. You should feel at ease during this visit because you will have an opportunity to better understand your hearing needs and explore possible solutions.

## **Building understanding and trust**

Your hearing care professional is qualified to evaluate your hearing and offer advice and solutions that are appropriate for you. To establish an understanding and trusting connection right from the start, your hearing care professional will spend some time to get to know you, to learn what you are experiencing, and to explore what's important to you.

For example, you may receive information about hearing protection, communication tips, recommendations to visit a medical doctor, or advice about hearing devices.

## **The hearing evaluation**

Your hearing care professional will ask you about your hearing history to understand what factors have influenced your hearing, and also to get more information on your personal hearing needs.

To make the most of the evaluation it's best to come prepared. Before your appointment, spend a few moments thinking about how hearing affects your life, what challenges are you experiencing, and what would improve if you could overcome these challenges.



Please answer these questions on this form and bring it with you to your appointment. They will help your hearing care professional better understand your needs. It may also help if you can talk these over with your family and friends.

Do you think that you have a hearing loss? Please explain.

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In which situations have you experienced challenges with your hearing?

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Have you ever felt frustrated, embarrassed or discouraged in difficult listening situations. Please explain.

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What have your family members or friends said to you about your hearing?

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If your hearing was improved, how would things be different for you?

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Please write down any questions you have about your hearing.

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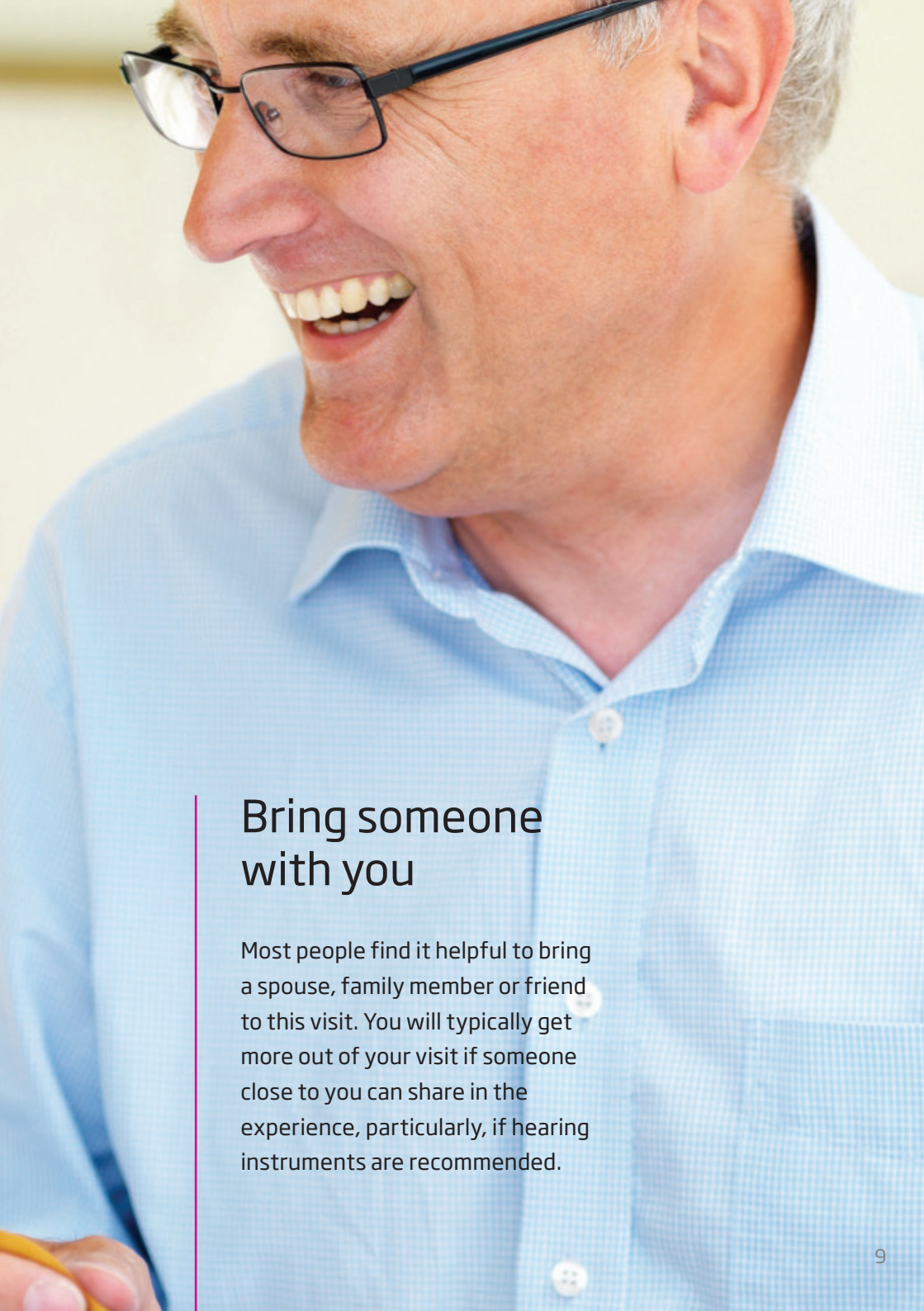
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## Bring someone with you

Most people find it helpful to bring a spouse, family member or friend to this visit. You will typically get more out of your visit if someone close to you can share in the experience, particularly, if hearing instruments are recommended.

# The hearing evaluation

The hearing evaluation is a very important part of your appointment. It is typically performed in a sound-controlled setting, usually a sound booth or very quiet room to keep any background sounds from interfering with your concentration. The instructions are clear and the evaluation is as brief as possible to provide the necessary information. You will be informed of the results and interpretation of the evaluation when it's complete.

## **Audiogram**

Your Audiogram is a graph of your hearing thresholds for high and low pitched sounds. All you have to do is listen to quiet tones and respond whenever you hear by pushing a button or raising your hand. The volume of each tone is adjusted each time you respond to find the softest level you can hear (your threshold.) Through this method, your hearing care professional completes your graph using the symbol "X" to represent your left ear thresholds, and the symbol "O" for your right ear thresholds.

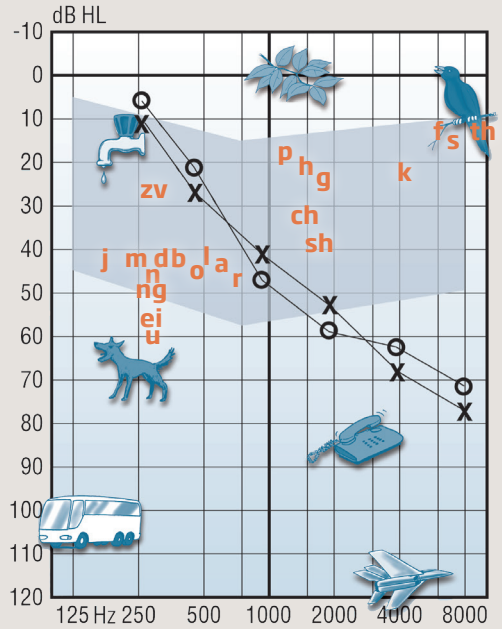
Reading the audiogram is relatively easy. You just have to remember that frequencies, or pitches, are represented across the bottom from left (low-125 Hz) to right (high-8000 Hz). This is not unlike the the piano, where the low bass sounds are on the left, and the high treble sounds are on the right. Loudness or volume levels are shown from top to bottom, with the quietest sounds at the top of the graph and the loudest sounds at the bottom. In this example, the person could hear the low-pitched sounds, even when they were very soft, but could not hear the high-pitched sounds until the volume was increased.

## **Speech audiometry**

You may also be asked to listen to words and repeat them. To determine your speech threshold, the words will become softer and softer until you can just barely recognize them. You may also hear speech at a more comfortable listening level to check how well you understand if the volume is appropriate for your needs. If necessary, other measures can be performed to evaluate how well you hear speech in noisy environments.

## Other tests

Your hearing care professional may also evaluate other aspects of ear function to get more information about the most appropriate plan for you.



↑ Sounds above the lines are not audible      ○ Right ear  
 ↓ Sounds below the lines are audible        × Left ear



Low Bass



High Treble

# Types of hearing loss

In general, there are three types of hearing loss:



## 1. Conductive Hearing Loss:

This type of hearing loss originates in the ear canal and/or the structures in the middle ear. It occurs when sounds from the outside world cannot be transmitted normally through the ear canal and/or middle ear to the inner ear. The most common causes of conductive hearing loss can be a buildup of wax in the ear canal, a perforated eardrum, fluid in the middle ear (common in children), or damaged or defective ossicles (middle ear bones). A person with conductive hearing loss may notice that their ears seem to be full or plugged. Many conductive hearing losses can be medically or surgically treated. If for some reason the hearing loss cannot be corrected, hearing instruments can help greatly.

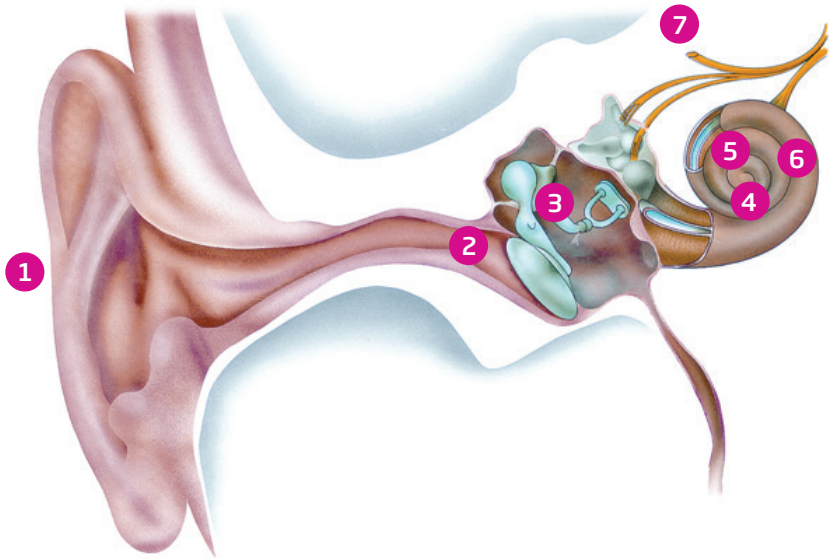
## 2. Sensorineural Hearing Loss:

This type of hearing loss is the most common type of hearing loss. More than 90 percent of all hearing instrument wearers have sensorineural hearing loss, resulting from problems in the inner ear or the auditory nerve. Inner ear hair cell damage is the most common reason for sensorineural hearing loss. These tiny hair cells, once damaged or destroyed, become unable to convert sound vibrations into the electrical signals needed by the auditory nerve. Sensorineural hearing loss can be attributed to long-term occupational or recreational exposure to loud noise. It also commonly occurs in the later decades of life. People with sensorineural hearing loss typically report they can hear people speak, but have trouble understanding what they're saying. It often seems to them that people are "mumbling." Usually there is no medical way to correct this, but hearing devices can improve the situation greatly.

### 3. Mixed Hearing Loss:

This kind of hearing loss originates partly in the middle ear and partly in the inner ear or auditory nerve. For example, the person may have a noise-induced hearing loss from noise exposure and a perforation in the eardrum. The combination of sensorineural and conductive hearing loss is therefore, mixed.





## How sounds travel through the ear

The anatomy of the ear is precisely shaped to capture sound waves and amplify them. Every 'station' has a precise function. This is how it works:

- 1 Sound waves are picked up by the outer ear and travel down the ear canal.
- 2 Sound is channeled to the eardrum, which vibrates when the sound waves touch it.
- 3 The vibrations are picked up by three tiny bones known as the hammer, anvil and stirrup, which create a bridge from the eardrum to the inner ear.
- 4 The vibrations move on to the cochlea—a spiral-shaped capsule housing a system of fluid-filled tubes.
- 5 When the sound waves reach the fluid it begins to move, setting thousands of tiny hair cells in motion.
- 6 The movements of the hair cells are transformed into electric impulses that travel along the auditory nerve to the brain.
- 7 The brain decodes and interprets the electronic impulses, turning a stream of speech sounds into separate, recognizable words.

# Your Hearing Results

Your hearing care professional will explain the results of your hearing evaluation. If you are told you have a hearing loss, you may wonder what caused it. It is often not possible to determine a cause with high certainty. Your history and the results of your hearing evaluation will help provide information. This can guide your hearing care professional to a likely interpretation but more importantly, to suggested next steps.

## Age-related changes

It is very common for people to experience hearing changes as they get a bit older. The loss of hair cells in the inner ear is a frequent cause. Some people experience a significant loss of hair cells at the age of 50, while others only have a negligible loss, even at the age of 80. Hearing difficulties associated with age-related changes can be greatly improved with the right hearing device.

## Noise-related changes

If you have been exposed to excessive noise – either in one very intense episode, or over an extended period, it is likely that your hearing has been affected. Depending on the extent and individual sensitivity to noise, it is common that higher frequency sounds would be more difficult to hear. Hearing devices help people with noise-related hearing changes to hear much better.

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## Next steps

Once your hearing care professional has interpreted the results of your hearing evaluation and explained them to you clearly, it's time to develop a plan for next steps. The questions included in this booklet that you answered prior to your evaluation will be very helpful for this discussion. If hearing devices are recommended, you should be confident that today's choices are easy to try, often right in the office or in your own home. People who use hearing devices report an improved quality of life and a new dimension in hearing and belonging.

Hearing Care Professional: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of fitting: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_

