

YOUR VALUES  
YOUR PREFERENCES  
YOUR CHOICE

Allina Health 

# Hearing Loss and Hearing Aid Options

*Options for Style and Technology*



# Understanding Hearing Loss

## Hearing Loss

If you have hearing loss, part of your ear has been damaged. A hearing aid cannot bring back normal hearing but it can help you hear better.

Hearing loss affects each person differently. For example, one person with mild hearing loss will have no problems with their day-to-day activities. Another person may have a lot of problems hearing and understanding others.

Most people lose their hearing over time. It will take time for you to get used to hearing the sounds you have been missing.

Call your primary care provider if you are having trouble hearing and understanding others. They may want you to see an audiologist (hearing specialist) to have a hearing test.

## What are the effects of hearing loss?

Hearing loss that is not treated can affect communication with family and friends, as well as at work. Over time, this can lead to isolation and depression.

## How does aging affect hearing loss?

In general, hearing levels slowly decline as you get older. After age 40, you may begin to notice some changes in the way your brain processes sound. You may have more problems separating one voice from another when there is a lot of background noise. You may also have trouble understanding fast speech.

These problems can get worse with age. Hearing loss caused by aging usually affects high pitch sounds more than low pitch sounds.

Hearing aids can help you hear certain pitches you are missing. However, hearing aids cannot give you back normal hearing.

## Hearing Aids

Hearing aids are devices that make sounds louder at many different pitches.

There are many different types and styles of hearing aids. Hearing aids can:

- make the sound louder so it can reach the parts of the ear that are still working
- help you better understand people talking to you in a different listening situations
- help you keep the volume on the television lower.

After your hearing test, your audiologist will help you find the right hearing aids for you.

## How do they work?

Hearing aids are devices that make sounds louder. They can be worn inside the outer ear, in the ear canal or behind the ear. There are many different shapes, sizes and styles available.

There are 3 basic parts to hearing aids:

- **microphone:** receives the sound
- **amplifier:** makes the sound louder
- **speaker:** sends the sound to the ear.

# Types of Hearing Aids

## One or Two Hearing Aids

If you have hearing loss in both ears, you should have 2 hearing aids. Your brain uses the information it gets from both ears to help you:

- figure out where sounds are coming from
- filter out sounds you do not need
- hear better when there is background noise.

Your brain does a better job of processing sound when it gets the same information from both ears.

If cost is a concern you should get two hearing aids with lower technology rather than one hearing aid with better technology.

## Technology Options

The technology inside the hearing aids determines the cost. Hearing aids that are less expensive may need you to make adjustments and do well in quiet situations.

Hearing aids that are more expensive adjust themselves as you go between different listening situations.

Your audiologist will ask you about how much time you spend in difficult listening situations to help determine what level of technology is right for you.

## Hearing Aid Options

There are many different types of hearing aid options available. Some of these options may impact the type of hearing aid you can get.

You may not need some of these options depending on your type of hearing loss or lifestyle. You and your audiologist will decide which options are right for you.

These options include:

- **directional microphone:** This helps you hear better when there is a lot of background noise.
- **feedback system:** This helps to stop the hearing aid from making unwanted whistling or squealing sounds.
- **telecoil or telephone program:** This can help you hear better on the phone. It also can give you direct access to audio in certain public venues like churches, museums and theaters.
- **frequency transposition:** This is helpful for very severe hearing loss in high pitches. It moves high pitch sounds into a lower pitch where your ears can hear better.
- **multiple programs:** This allows you to change the sound quality depending on the listening environment you are in.
- **volume adjustment:** This allows you to adjust the volume.
- **Bluetooth® or connectivity:** This allows you to connect to a cell phone or television through wireless technology, often with added accessories.

## Styles of Hearing Aids

There are many types of hearing aid styles (how it will look on the outside of your ear). See the next 2 pages for options.

# Types of Hearing Aids (Behind-the-ear Styles)

## Behind-the-ear



Photo courtesy of Phonak

This hearing aid:

- fits behind the ear with the tube connected to a custom earmold
- is good for mild to profound hearing loss
- has no electronic parts in the ear canal.

## Slim tube behind-the-ear



Photo courtesy of Phonak

This hearing aid:

- fits behind the ear with a thin tube
- is good for mild to severe hearing loss
- has no electronic parts in the ear canal
- can be used with either a custom earmold or a non-custom tip.

## Receiver-in-the-ear



Photo courtesy of Phonak

This hearing aid:

- fits behind the ear with a wire receiver (tiny speaker) in the ear canal
- is good for mild to profound hearing loss
- can be used with either a custom earmold or a non-custom tip.

# Types of Hearing Aids (Custom Styles)

## Full shell in-the-ear



Photo courtesy of Phonak

This hearing aid:

- is made to fit the whole outer portion of your ear
- is good for mild to severe hearing loss
- has a custom fit and requires an ear impression.

## In-the-canal



Photo courtesy of Phonak

This hearing aid:

- is made to fit the size and shape of your ear canal
- is good for mild to moderately-severe hearing loss
- has a custom fit and requires an ear impression.

## Half shell in-the-ear



Photo courtesy of Phonak

This hearing aid:

- is made to fit half of the outer portion of your ear
- is good for mild to severe hearing loss
- has a custom fit and requires an ear impression.

## Completely-in-the-canal



Photo courtesy of Phonak

This hearing aid:

- is almost completely hidden in your ear canal
- is good for mild to moderately-severe hearing loss
- has a custom fit and requires an ear impression.

# Comparing Your Options (Style)

This chart will help you choose the best style for your hearing aids.

	Behind-the-ear Styles			Custom Styles			
	Behind-the-ear	Slim Tube Behind-the-ear	Receiver In-the-ear	Full Shell In-the-ear	Half Shell In-the-ear	In-the-canal	Completely in-the-canal
<b>Comfort</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It fits on the outside of your ear with a tube connected to a custom earmold.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It fits on the outside of your ear with a narrow tube inserted into the ear.</li> <li>It does not have any electronic parts in your ear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It fits on the outside of your ear with a thin wire inserted into the ear.</li> <li>It can be worn with a custom or non-custom tip.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It fits completely inside your ear.</li> <li>It is made to fit the size and shape of your ear.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is made to fit the size and shape of your ear canal.</li> <li>A small part of the hearing aid may be difficult if you have vision issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is almost completely hidden inside your ear.</li> <li>A small part of the hearing aid may be difficult if you have vision issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Microphone</b>	It has a directional microphone (2 microphones).			It can have 1 or 2 microphones depending on size.			It can only fit 1 microphone.
<b>Telecoil</b>	Telecoil may be an option, depending on the size.					It is too small for telecoil.	
<b>Volume adjust</b>	It allows for volume control depending on the hearing aid size.						It is too small for volume control.
<b>Battery life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some styles are rechargeable.</li> <li>Battery life will depend on size of hearing aid.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Battery life will depend on size of hearing aid.</li> <li>Requires disposable batteries.</li> </ul>			

# Comparing Your Options (Technology)

This chart will help you choose the best technology for your hearing aids.

	Premium	Advanced	Standard	Essential
<b>Sound quality</b>	It offers the best sound quality.	It offers excellent sound quality.	It offers good sound quality.	It offers good sound quality.
<b>Background noise</b>	It will choose the best combination of settings for you for each listening environment.	It will choose between multiple settings for you for each listening environment.	It will choose between settings for you for quiet and noise.	You will choose the program you want for quiet and noise.
<b>Styles</b>	It comes in all styles mentioned on page 4.			
<b>Feedback system</b>	It offers the best feedback system.	It offers an excellent feedback system.	It offers a good feedback system.	
<b>Warranty</b>	It has a 3-year warranty for repair, loss and damage.		It has a 2-year warranty for repair, loss and damage.	
<b>Adjustments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Premium hearing aids are fully automatic.</li> <li>■ Premium hearing aids have the most channels to allow adjustments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advanced hearing aids are automatic.</li> <li>■ You may need to make small adjustments in noisy environments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ You will need to make some manual adjustments.</li> <li>■ You will likely need to make adjustments in environments where you are listening as part of a group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ You will need to make manual adjustments.</li> <li>■ You may need to make adjustments in all environments except quiet ones.</li> </ul>
<b>Price</b>	This is the most expensive option. \$\$\$\$	This is the second most expensive option. \$\$\$	This is the third most expensive option. \$\$	This is the least expensive option. \$
<b>Your cost</b>	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

# Comparing Your Options (Technology) (continued)

All hearing aids are available in 4 technology levels: premium, advanced, standard and essential. You will need to choose one of these levels for your hearing aids.

The chart below shows the type of listening environments where each technology level works well. Check the box to the left of each environment you are often part of. This may help you choose the best technology for your lifestyle.

	Listening Environment	Premium	Advanced	Standard	Essential
<input type="checkbox"/>	watching television	X	X	X	X
<input type="checkbox"/>	talking on the phone	X	X	X	X
<input type="checkbox"/>	having a small-group conversation	X	X	X	X
<input type="checkbox"/>	having a quiet conversation	X	X	X	X
<input type="checkbox"/>	shopping or in a public place	X	X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	eating at a restaurant	X	X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	wireless connection to cell phones with Bluetooth®	X	X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	attending a meeting or lecture	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	spending time in a large, echoing room, such as a place of worship	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	talking while doing an outdoor activity, such as golf	X			
<input type="checkbox"/>	listening to music for enjoyment or attending a concert	X			
<input type="checkbox"/>	traveling long distances in a plane, train or vehicle	X			



# After You Choose Your Hearing Aids

When you decide what type of hearing aid you would like you may need to have impressions taken of your ears.

For impressions, putty will be placed in your ears to take the shape. This will take about 5 to 10 minutes to dry and be removed.

Your audiologist will go over any paperwork with you. You will be given written information to take with you to read before you come back to pick up your hearing aids.

It will take 2 to 4 weeks to get your hearing aids. An appointment will be made for you to come in and be fit with your hearing aids.

During your fitting appointment, your audiologist:

- will create the settings in the hearing aids that are best for your hearing loss and how the hearing aids fit in your ears
- make sure the hearing aids fit right in your ears
- show you how to work the hearing aids
- show you how to take care of the hearing aids.

You will get a chance to practice putting the hearing aids in and taking them out.

After you are fit with you hearing aids, you will come back 1 to 2 weeks later for your follow-up appointment. Your audiologist will make sure the hearing aids are fitting well. They will make any adjustments as needed.

Call your audiologist if you have any questions or concerns before this appointment.

## Hearing Aid Trial Period

You will be given a 45-day trial period when you buy your hearing aids. During this time, you will be able to make sure you have the right style, technology and features for you.

If you return your hearing aids during the trial period, you will be refunded for the hearing aids and part of the dispensing fee.

You may need to see your audiologist 3 to 4 times during the trial period to make sure that the hearing aids are fitting well and working right for you.

# Next Steps

## Questions for Your Audiologist

1. Will this hearing aid help me hear better?

2. Can I get this hearing aid wet?

3. Will this hearing aid be noticeable?

4. Where can I buy the batteries?

5. How long do the hearing aids last?

6. How often will I need to come back for follow-up appointments?

7. What is the next step for me?

8. Other questions: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Next Steps (continued)

## Questions for Your Insurance Provider

Call your insurance provider to find out what services are covered and how much you will need to pay. The phone number is on the back of your insurance card.

- The information provided to you is not a guarantee of payment. This is a quote of benefits.

Below is a summary of your benefits from (primary insurance) \_\_\_\_\_ on (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

This estimate is based on the insurance information you provided. It is your responsibility to confirm this estimate with your insurance provider.

- Authorization required:  Yes  No

Copay (the amount you pay when you receive a medical service):

\_\_\_\_\_

Coinsurance (percent of the total charge):

\_\_\_\_\_

Deductible (what you pay before insurance benefits are paid):

\_\_\_\_\_

Out-of-pocket (what you need to cover that insurance does not):

\_\_\_\_\_

- Are these codes covered:

- 92590.0 (hearing aid exam or selection)
- 92592.0 (hearing aid check up)
- V5160 (dispensing fee binaural)
- V5241 (dispensing fee monaural)

- What will I have to pay for my deductible:

- Individual  Family

- How much of my deductible have I met for the year:

\_\_\_\_\_

- How often am I eligible for hearing aids?

- Does my coverage include 1 or 2 hearing aids?

- Is there a maximum (highest amount your insurance company will reimburse you?)  Yes  No

- Does my health care provider need approval from my health insurance plan:  Yes  No

— If yes, is there a form I will need to fill out?

Where do I send the form after I have filled it out?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Can I pay for the hearing aids and get reimbursed or do the charges need to be submitted by Allina Health:  Yes  No

— If yes, is there a form I will need to fill out?

Where do I send the form after I have filled it out?

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English: ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-877-506-4595.

Spanish: ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-877-506-4595.

Hmong: LUS CEEV: Yog tias koj hais lus Hmoob, cov kev pab txog lus, muaj kev pab dawb rau koj. Hu rau 1-877-506-4595.



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