

Thinking About OTCs?

Consult an Audiologist First

With over-the-counter (OTC) hearing devices now available in stores and online, you may wonder if this new, do-it-yourself option that doesn't require a prescription or a hearing evaluation is the best approach for treating hearing loss.

Managing your hearing health on your own has its drawbacks. The smartest first step for any patient with hearing difficulties is to get a hearing evaluation from a licensed audiologist, even if they are already planning to buy an OTC hearing aid.

Why You Need an Audiologist

Rule Out Medical Conditions—During an evaluation, an audiologist will check for common medical causes of hearing loss. If a medical condition is causing your hearing loss, buying an OTC device will not help you hear better—and avoiding treatment for an underlying medical issue could harm your overall health.

Pinpoint the Degree of Loss—An audiologist also determines the severity and type of loss an individual may be experiencing. This information is important because OTCs

are only for people with mild to moderate hearing loss. If you have severe hearing loss, OTCs will not provide the proper amplification levels.

Offer Treatment for All Ages—Have a child with hearing loss? Since OTCs are for adults 18 and older, they'll require devices prescribed by an audiologist.

Serve as Your Long-Term Hearing Health Care Partner—An audiologist can guide you to the device best suited to your needs. That could be an OTC device today, but a prescription device may be more appropriate in the future.

Audiologists are skilled in selecting the appropriate technology, programming it to fit your unique hearing profile and providing follow-up care for optimal hearing. With OTCs, you're on your own.

Getting treatment for hearing loss is a life-changing decision. A trusted professional can help guide you through the correct steps. Before purchasing any device—OTC or prescription—schedule a hearing evaluation with one of our audiologists.

EDUCATIONAL ONLINE EVENT

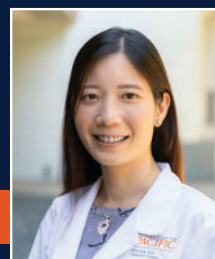
Join us for our quarterly webinar series!

When Hearing Aids Are Not Enough

Friday, February 3, 2023 · 11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

We will discuss various options that help improve speech understanding beyond hearing aids, including communication strategies, auditory training programs and hearing implants.

Presented by: Gail Amornpongchai, Au.D.,
Munirah Awad, Au.D. & Anna Walters, B.S. (Audiology Extern)



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Types of Hearing Loss

and How Often Patients Need a Hearing Evaluation

Hearing loss is either sensorineural, conductive or mixed. The type of hearing loss you have determines your treatment.

Conductive hearing loss happens when there is an issue with sounds getting through the outer and middle ear. It is caused by otitis media, middle ear fluid, poor Eustachian tube function, earwax or a benign tumor. Surgery or medicine can frequently resolve it.¹

Sensorineural hearing loss occurs when the inner ear or the vestibulocochlear nerve sustains damage. It is the most common type of permanent hearing loss and occurs due to presbycusis (age-related hearing loss), noise exposure, ototoxicity, genetics or head trauma. Hearing devices can help.²

Mixed hearing loss is a combination of conductive and sensorineural hearing loss and requires medications, surgery and hearing devices to treat it.³

Certain patients are more at risk for hearing loss than others. Your doctor should refer you to an audiologist using the following guidelines from The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

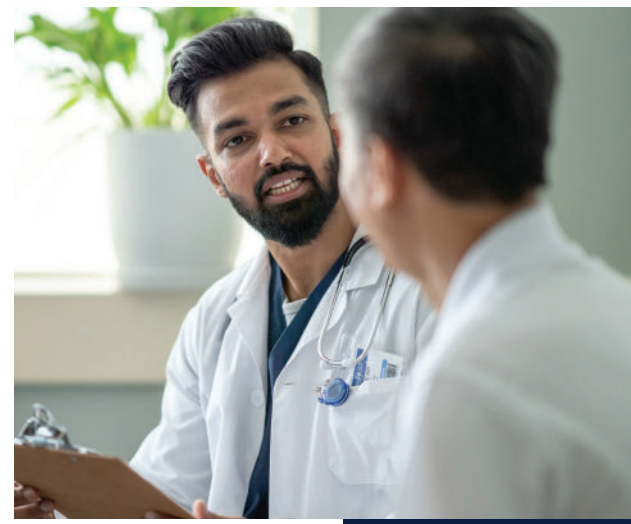
- Healthy adults aged 18–40 who are not experiencing any noticeable hearing loss should have their hearing tested every three to five years.

The following people should have a hearing evaluation annually:

- Individuals over 60.
- People with a history of noise exposure at work or during recreational activities.
- Patients taking ototoxic medications or those known to damage the inner ear.
- Individuals with hearing loss.

If hearing loss is detected, an audiologist can provide comprehensive treatment under the medical model, including offering an individualized treatment plan, precise fitting and programming of their devices, follow-up care, communication strategies and more. They serve as your lifelong hearing health expert, helping ensure optimal hearing over time.

1. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Conductive hearing loss. <https://www.asha.org/public/hearing/conductive-hearing-loss/>
2. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Sensorineural hearing loss. <https://www.asha.org/public/hearing/sensorineural-hearing-loss/>
3. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Mixed hearing loss. <https://www.asha.org/public/hearing/mixed-hearing-loss/>



The Mechanics of Hearing



Hearing is an intricate, multistep process. During this process, the ears change sound waves into electrical impulses that the auditory nerve carries to the brain, allowing an individual to perceive sound.

Step One: The outer ear and concha collect sound waves and direct them into the external auditory canal.

Step Two: The ear canal carries sound waves to the tympanic membrane, often referred to as the eardrum, causing the eardrum to vibrate.

Step Three: The bones in the middle ear (malleus, incus and stapes) receive the vibrations from the eardrum.

Step Four: The bones in the middle ear amplify the vibrations and transmit them to the inner ear.

Step Five: Vibrations pass through the oval window, setting the fluid inside the cochlea in motion. Special nerve hair cells within the cochlea turn the sound into electrical impulses.

Step Six: The auditory nerve sends these electrical impulses to the brain's central auditory cortex, where they are processed as sound.

Damage to the cochlea's hair cells, primarily through aging or exposure to loud noise, causes permanent hearing loss.

Hearing care under the medical model includes a diagnosis of any underlying medical conditions; evaluation of your hearing loss and treatment needs; expert programming, fitting and follow-up care for your hearing devices; auditory rehabilitation; and counseling and other services that help you maximize your hearing and communication abilities.

To ensure you receive the proper medical care for your hearing loss, set up an appointment with one of our skilled audiologists by calling (209) 946-7378.

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