

## **Hearing Aid Evaluations and Fittings**

Many consumers are unsure where to find professional help with their hearing. Our highly trained staff provides hearing healthcare in a manner that provides you with the information that you need for a successful hearing aid experience.

Most adults with hearing loss can be helped with hearing aids. Choosing the right hearing aid can be difficult. There is an enormous amount of information regarding hearing aids and the choices can be daunting. Choosing a hearing care professional who can guide you through this process is the first critical decision in purchasing hearing aids.

Of course, the first step to a successful hearing aid experience is an accurate audiological evaluation or hearing test. Equally important is a determination regarding your specific needs and lifestyle. It is critical to convey this information to the hearing healthcare professional. Finally, everyone has a budget. Your budgetary constraints should be discussed. Hearing aids are rarely covered by insurance.

## **The Truth about Hearing Aids**

Realistic Expectations: Hearing aids work very well when they are fit and adjusted appropriately. All hearing aids should be comfortable with respect to the physical fit and the sound loudness. If there is any discomfort the wearer should return to their hearing care professional immediately for alterations to provide a comfortable fit. Hearing aids provide the wearer with additional information to help that person to hear and understand better. They do not provide "perfect" hearing.

Getting Used to Hearing Aids: People learn at different rates. Some people need a few days to adjust to their new hearing aids but most need a few weeks. There are some who require several months to make the adjustment. In general, the greater the hearing loss and the longer the hearing loss has been present the more difficult the transition to using hearing aids. There is no perfect way to learn how to adjust to hearing aids. Hearing care professionals are uniquely trained to provide rehabilitative programs that should occur after a hearing aid has been fit.

Background Noise: Virtually everyone, hearing aid users and non hearing aid users complain about background noise at one time or another. There is no way for a hearing aid to eliminate the sounds that the wearer does not want to hear. The good news is that there are now hearing aid circuits and features available that help to minimize some unwanted sounds. There is a great deal of research that reveals dual microphones effectively reduce background noise for many people with certain types of hearing losses. Your hearing care professional can help you determine the best circuits and microphone options for your hearing loss and communication needs. The best and most efficient way to reduce background noise is through the use of assisted listening devices such as FM technology. Ask a hearing care professional how this technology can work with your hearing aid to improve your ability to hear and understand in difficult listening situations.

One vs. Two Hearing Aids: You have two ears because you need two ears. If you have a hearing loss in each ear that could benefit from hearing aids you should wear two hearing aids. Wearing hearing aids bilaterally (in each ear) will improve your ability to hear in noisy settings, allow you to localize sounds in your environment, improve the ability to understand speech and give sound a fuller quality.

Fact: Over 60% of individuals who wear hearing aids are fit binaurally. The benefits of wearing two hearing aids are enhanced ability to (a) hear better in the presence of background noise, (b) determine where sound is coming from, and (c) hear soft sounds at lower levels.

### **The Hearing Aid Process:**

Evaluation: At the time of the hearing evaluation a case history will be taken to determine the type of hearing problem that the individual perceives and how his/her family perceives the hearing problem. Questions will also be asked about the onset of the hearing loss, presence of tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and dizziness. Based on the results of the hearing test and the answers to these questions Our highly trained staff may make a referral to a medical doctor for an examination and possible treatment. If the testing reveals a sensori-neural hearing loss, a hearing aid may be recommended for one or both ears.

Hearing Aid Evaluation: There are literally thousands of hearing aids from which to choose. Our highly trained staff will use the information that was provided in the case history and in the audiological evaluation to help narrow those choices for you. The final decision on which hearing aid is purchased is the choice of the wearer. The main types of hearing aids available today are conventional or Analog and Digital.

### **Hearing Aid Technology**

Conventional Hearing Aid Technology: Conventional analog hearing aids are basically amplifiers that feature manual volume controls and manual fine-tuning. These hearing aids are primarily beneficial for listening in easy, relatively quiet situations, such as one-on-one conversation and listening to the television, because all of the sounds are typically amplified in exactly the same way. This technology provides limited flexibility in meeting individual needs.

Digital Hearing Aid Technology: Digital technology accounts for most of the hearing aids sold today. In fact, the basic digital hearing aid cost about the same as the conventional analog hearing aid. The digital hearing aid contains a computer chip that amplifies sounds digitally. The quality of the sound produced by the computer chip is excellent.

Digital hearing aids are flexible and can be re-programmed by our highly trained staff by using a computer that is equipped with special software as well as hardware that allows the hearing aid and computer to be connected. Digital hearing aids can act on soft sounds in one way and on loud sounds in a completely different fashion. Digital hearing aids also have a variety of bands or equalizers. Depending on the level of the digital technology there may be as few as two bands or as many as twenty + bands. The more advanced the digital chip the more bands that it will possess. Some digital hearing aids have the capability to reduce some environmental noises such as motors running or dishes clanging.

Hearing Aid Fitting: During the hearing aid fitting the device is programmed to meet the needs of the wearer. The new wearer is provided with instructions regarding how to put the hearing aid in the ear and remove it, how to change batteries and how to care for and clean the device. This is also the time that the hearing care professional reiterates the function of the hearing aid as it relates to the individual's life style.

Attitude is the key to the hearing aid user's success.

A hearing aid is exactly what it says – it is an "aid" to help you hear better.

### **Ensuring Hearing Aid Satisfaction**

Recognize your hearing loss is making communication difficult. Know that help is available. Hearing aid studies have shown that people who have a positive attitude do better with hearing aids.

Identify communication settings that are difficult for you. Relate those settings to your hearing care professional. If your hearing care professional understands your communication needs, they can better address your problems in choosing the best hearing aid for you, programming the hearing aid and helping you to develop strategies to manage your difficult situations. Work with your hearing care professional to find the best hearing aids for your hearing loss, your lifestyle and your communication needs. Your neighbor or friend's choice in hearing aids may not be your best choice. No two people are alike.

Be realistic. Hearing loss typically develops over many years. Becoming re-acquainted with sounds while using hearing aids will take practice and time. It is important not to become disillusioned or frustrated while your brain adjusts to the sounds provided by your hearing aids.

Be patient with yourself and your new hearing aids. Your hearing care professional is your advocate. Continue to ask questions to maximize the use of your hearing aids.

Call Heart River Hearing Aid Practice today at 701-227-0728 to schedule your free hearing assessment.