



YARMOUTH AUDIOLOGY

MAINE'S HOME FOR HEARING

Hearing Aid Decision Making Checklist

☐ Understand your hearing needs.

- ☐ **Is there a medical condition affecting your hearing?** A diagnostic audiologic evaluation is recommended to rule out any medical conditions. This is performed by an audiologist and is billed to your insurance. (A hearing test done by a hearing instrument specialist/hearing aid dealer is free, not diagnostic, and is used for programming hearing aids.) Make sure you understand who you are working with. Make sure you understand the results of your hearing evaluation. An audiologist will provide a complete report to your primary care provider (PCP) and any involved Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) physician, with your consent. Consult with your PCP or ENT regarding the results and recommendations.
- ☐ **Should I consider prescription hearing aids or over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids?** **Prescription hearing aids** have sophisticated circuitry, allowing for precise fine tuning for your hearing needs and better processing of background sounds. They are more expensive than OTC's, although entry level models may be similarly priced with some of the costlier OTC's. Prescription hearing aids should come with a warranty and an in-person service package. **OTC hearing aids** cannot be fine-tuned as precisely to your hearing needs and act more as amplifiers than sophisticated noise processors. It's often up to you to self-adjust the OTC's to what you think matches your hearing loss. OTC's can be used for mild or moderate hearing losses only. Warranty and service packages (online vs. in person) vary.

☐ What is included in a hearing aid purchase?

- ☐ **Maine requires a 30-day trial period for prescription hearing aids. How long is the trial period you will have?**
- ☐ **How many visits are included in the trial period?**
- ☐ **Will "Real Ear Measurements" be made during the trial period? Is it included in the package?** (This is when microphones are placed in the ear canals alongside the hearing aids to objectively measure the output in your ears and match to a prescriptive target.)
- ☐ **What fee do you pay if you return the hearing aids?**
- ☐ **How many years is the hearing aid warranty for the model you are considering?**
- ☐ **Is there a loss/damage-beyond-repair warranty and if so, for how many years? What is the deductible amount per hearing aid?**
- ☐ **How many years of in-office services are covered? Is there a limited number of visits?**

☐ Important questions:

- ☐ **Who is your hearing care provider?** Both audiologists and hearing instrument specialists/hearing aid dealers are licensed to program and sell hearing aids. Understand who you will be working with, and be confident in that person's experience. Ask if you might sometimes be working with someone else in the practice.
- ☐ **Is the hearing aid software locked?** There are a few manufacturers who lock their software, meaning that you can only receive services from that company. There are several global manufacturers who offer prescription hearing aids that do not lock their software, meaning you can receive services from a different practice if you choose.
- ☐ **Do you have a hearing aid insurance benefit?** Call your insurance company to find out. Sometimes an insurance benefit dictates where you go for hearing services. This could be with either an audiologist or a hearing instrument specialist/hearing aid dealer.

- ❑ **Are there hidden costs with a hearing aid discount?** Are you getting the exact same product as if you paid full price? Ask if you are getting older technology (such as an older model), lower performance level, no Bluetooth, less warranty, less in-office coverage, or no Real Ear Measurements.
- ❑ **What hearing aid manufacturer is recommended to you and why?** Some practices offer just one manufacturer. Other practices offer more than one manufacturer, which might provide more options for your individual hearing needs.
- ❑ **What hearing aid options are important to you?**
 - ❑ **Technology Level.** Prescription hearing aid models often come in a hierarchy of technology levels, from the highest (best for background noise and fine tuning) to the lowest (best for quiet lifestyles with limited fine tuning).
 - ❑ **Rechargeable vs. battery.** Rechargeable hearing aids typically last all day (each manufacturer's daily charge life varies, and the amount of streaming can affect this). Over time, rechargeable hearing aids will save you money and are the most popular choice. The lithium ion battery will age over time and should be replaced prior to the hearing aid's warranty expiration, to maximize the daily charge life. Some manufacturers allow for the rechargeable battery to be changed at your provider's practice, whereas others require the hearing aid to be sent to the manufacturer (if this is the case, ask if you could have loaners and at what cost if any). For regular batteries, expect to change them once or twice a week.
 - ❑ **Over the ear or in the ear.** Over the ear styles often have the most versatility and durability. In the ear styles can fill the bowl of your ear or be so small, they are hardly noticeable (some of these styles are custom made and others are ready to wear). Smaller styles sometimes don't have as many features (such as Bluetooth), depending on their size. One very small type (called Lyric) stays in your ear 24/7 and must be inserted by a Lyric-certified provider (like us) and changed every 6-8 weeks (and are typically not covered by insurance). Not as many providers are Lyric certified, so consider how far you'd have to drive.
 - ❑ **Bluetooth (either classic or low energy).** Some hearing aid manufacturers can connect to any Bluetooth device (classic), while others are MFi (made for iPhone, as well as select Android devices, are low energy). Low energy tends to have less battery drain, so consider how much you anticipate streaming each day.
 - ❑ **Telecoil.** Some hearing aids have a telecoil, allowing the wearer to stream from an induction loop system to better hear a speaker or audio. Some places that might have this system include entertainment venues, churches, and airports.
 - ❑ **Hearing aid locator.** Some manufacturers allow you to track the location of your hearing aids on an app through your smartphone (possibly just with an iPhone).
 - ❑ **Tinnitus programs.** For those with bothersome tinnitus, some hearing aids can introduce an alternate sound to help offset tinnitus perception or utilize notch therapy (which can be explained by your provider).
 - ❑ **On board controls.** Some hearing aid styles let you adjust the volume on the hearing aid itself (such as a single button or a rocker switch that also controls the other hearing aid). Some styles (such as very small in the ear models) might not have this ability, meaning you need a key fob or connection to an app on your smartphone to make adjustments.
 - ❑ **Accessories.** Some hearing aids are compatible with remote microphones (for hearing the speaker better in background noise), TV streamers (so you can hear the TV audio in your hearing aids), and key fobs for changing the volume or program.

We are happy to talk with you about your hearing needs. Please call us at 207-846-1380. Our office hours are Tuesday-Friday, 8am-4pm.