



Hearing aids really do work!

(From the Better Hearing Institute)

Hearing loss treatment was shown to improve:

- Earning power
- Communication in relationships
- Intimacy and warmth in family relationships
- Ease in communication
- Emotional stability
- Sense of control over life events
- Perception of mental functioning
- Physical health
- Group social participation

And just as importantly, hearing loss treatment was shown to reduce:

- Discrimination toward the person with the hearing loss
- Hearing loss compensation behaviors (i.e., pretending you hear)
- Anger and frustration in relationships
- Depression and depressive symptoms
- Feelings of paranoia
- Anxiety
- Social phobias
- Self-criticism

So why do people resist trying hearing aids?

- 1. They don't know how to recognize a hearing loss:** Most hearing loss is gradual, and therefore the signs of hearing loss are often unknown. Both the person with the hearing loss, as well as family and friends learn to adapt to the hearing loss over time. Many people do not realize they are adapting. Once a hearing loss is recognized, due to making mistakes in public or asking someone to repeat several times, the need for treatment arises.
- 2. One ear hears better than the other:** Although you may have one better ear, it does not mean that the hearing in that ear is normal. The better ear is often favored for the telephone, group conversations and often dictates where one sits at functions. This can cause the ear with more hearing impairment to atrophy and can be very misleading as to the severity of the hearing loss in the better ear. It is important to have your hearing tested on an annual basis to check the full hearing health of both ears. Most hearing loss affects both ears, and about 90% of patients are in need of hearing aids for both ears.
- 3. Stigma and cosmetics:** Some people reject hearing aids because they are concerned with the stigma of hearing loss and thus try to hide it from others. They believe others will think they're getting older, less competent, less attractive, and so on. Cosmetics no longer need to be a barrier to obtaining amplification. Since the 1990s, technological advances have permitted the hearing aid industry to develop hearing aids that range in size and some are almost invisible once in the ear. While the smaller hearing aids are not acoustically appropriate for all hearing losses, they are a good choice for a large percentage of patients who need hearing help.



4. Misdirected medical guidance: Most physicians receive very little training in the areas of hearing loss and hearing aids. Much of this misinformation is given (unintentionally) by family physicians that do not specialize in hearing problems. For instance, many physicians have told their patients that they're not candidates for hearing aids if they have hearing loss in one ear and good hearing in the other (unilateral hearing loss); if they have "nerve deafness" (an obsolete term for sensorineural hearing loss); or if the hearing loss still allows them to conduct a conversation in quiet. Therefore, if a concern about hearing ability arises, seeing a hearing specialist is recommended.

5. Not realizing the importance of hearing: We live in such a visually oriented society that often hearing plays a secondary role. As you probably know from your own experience, people who cannot hear well often experience anxiety, insecurity, isolation and depression. People gradually withdraw from family and friends because without auditory contact, they lose the feeling of being connected. We interact with one another through communication. Some individuals have been thought to be senile because they were not able to communicate well with family members. Others have missed out on opportunities at work because they could not hear specific instructions. Children have been misdiagnosed and labeled as delayed, inattentive or hyperactive due to hearing loss.

6. Misinformation that hearing aids don't work: A significant number of people with hearing loss mistakenly believe that hearing aids are not effective. Recent research, however, indicates that 76% of hearing aid users report satisfaction (defined as satisfied or very satisfied) with the ability of modern hearing aids to improve their hearing, while 66% report that hearing aids have significantly improved the quality of their life. A significant number of people report satisfaction with their hearing aids in quiet situations (87%) as well as in very difficult situations such as restaurants, places of worship or large groups. Research with more than 25,000 consumers demonstrates that not everyone benefits equally in all listening situations, nor do all types of hearing instrument circuitry perform the same in difficult listening situations. It is critical that the individual work with his/her audiologist to program the hearing aids and fine-tune them to improve the majority of listening situations.

7. Failure to trust in a hearing aid dispensing professional: The data shows that nearly 90% of consumers are satisfied with their hearing aid dispensing professional. It is certainly worth mentioning that the training, education and experience among dispensers of hearing aids has greatly increased over the years for both audiologists and hearing aid specialists.

8. Unrecognized value of hearing aids: Hearing aids have an impressive list of potential benefits, including greater earning power, improved interpersonal relationships, reduced discrimination toward the person with the hearing loss, reduced difficulty in communicating, reduced anger, frustration, depression and anxiety, enhanced emotional stability, reduced social phobias, greater belief that you are in control of your life, increased self-esteem, improved perceptions of mental acuity, improved health status, greater level of outgoingness (e.g. extroversion) and the list goes on and on.

9. Hearing aids are too expensive: Today's hearing aids range in price and provide many helpful features at all levels. Some people with hearing loss simply may not have the disposable income to afford today's modern hearing aids. However, there are programs to help most individuals obtain amplification. Please call us at (210) 697-0880 to discuss your options if you need help and cannot afford it. We work with one of the leading foundations in the country to help patients who cannot afford hearing instruments.