

Hearing aids and tinnitus – Choosing the right hearing aid

Taking advice from your audiologist

Your audiologist will guide you through the available styles and which type is best for you taking into account your level of hearing loss and your tinnitus. If possible we would recommend you try and use an independent audiologist that is not restricted to providing just one brand of hearing aid. That way you are more likely to end up with the hearing aid best suited to your needs.

To help you prepare for your visit to the audiologist, or hearing clinic we describe the main choices of hearing aid that are available and some of the factors that will help you choose the right type.

The main hearing aid styles

There are two main categories of hearing aids:

- In the ear, or in the ear canal where the audiologist will custom fit a hearing aid to suit your ear;
- Behind the ear where the hearing aid is discreetly tucked in behind your ear and linked via a small tube, or wire to your ear canal.

In the ear hearing (ITE) aid



The in the ear hearing aid is a custom-made device that fits into the bowl shaped area of your outer ear instead of inside the ear canal. Their larger size allows for easy insertion and removal as well as easy access to the battery compartment and volume control.

An impression is made of your ear, and the entire hearing aid is encased in the hearing aid shell.

More discreet versions of this style are the “Completely in the Canal” or “Invisible In the canal” hearing aids



These types are worn deep within the ear canal and custom made to suit your ear shape. The close placement to your eardrum ensures immediate sound travel and less ambient noise in loud environments. They are designed for daily removal, meaning wearers need to be comfortable inserting and removing the tiny device deep into their ear canal. The completely in the canal style is slightly easier to insert & remove.

Behind the ear (BTE) style hearing aid



Most manufacturers will offer this style of hearing aid in differing sizes and colours to help you choose one that is discreet and comfortable without having the expense of being custom made.

A specialist will manipulate the tubing to perfectly replicate the size and shape of your ear so you'll barely know it's there.

A popular version is called "receiver in the canal"

This style has two parts, the sound processor and the receiver. The sound processor is housed in the small case that sits behind the ear. A clear narrow tube follows the ear and leads to a small ear bud that houses the receiver that fits directly into your ear canal.

Factors to consider when selecting the right type for you

Factors	Why	Impact on suitable styles and settings
Your level of hearing loss	The smallest hearing aids are not normally recommended for severe or profound hearing loss.	Usually this will rule out the tiny aids known as "invisible within the (ear) canal."
Lifestyle	If you are often in a noisy environment where you want to hear conversations (for example restaurants, bars, conferences etc.) you will normally need the more advanced hearing aids.	<p>If this is your lifestyle it becomes more important to invest in the more advanced models that are effective at enhancing (and separating) speech from background noise.</p> <p>It is also important to be able to effectively hear both low pitch (male voices) and higher pitch voices (female).</p>
Lifestyle	If you want to use the hearing aid alongside Bluetooth enabled mobile phones, car phones, music players and TVs.	This requirement will also mean you are more likely to need to invest in the more advanced & more expensive types of hearing aid.
Lifestyle	If you are a very keen sports person it becomes important to have a hearing aid that is light and secure.	<p>This will typically rule out the older style and larger behind the ear models.</p> <p>The smaller behind the ear style (with potentially the receiver in the ear), or the in the ear custom made</p>

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		models are likely to be more suitable.
Appearance	The smaller and more discrete styles are more likely to appeal to those concerned with their appearance.	The small behind the ear style (open models, or receiver in the ear models) will appeal. However the most discrete are the in the canal (or invisible in the canal styles).
Dexterity	The smaller the hearing aid typically the more difficult it can be to use for people with poor dexterity. This includes inserting and removing the aids on a daily basis. But also the ability to use manual controls to adjust settings.	For people with poor dexterity the behind the ear, or in the ear (full or half shell) styles are likely to be best. Also where possible use of either set & forget settings, or remote control is likely to be preferable.
Last, but of course very important – those with tinnitus	The ability to naturally hear some background sounds can help. The ability to use the hearing aid to both enhance your hearing, but also as a sound generator is important.	The small behind the ear (open style, or receiver in the ear) style of hearing aid is good as it leaves your ear open to hear other sounds naturally. The ability to use Bluetooth and special Tinnitus Apps provided by the hearing aid companies will be important in selecting the best model. Many of the hearing aid manufacturers have specific models designed for people with hearing loss and tinnitus.

How long will a hearing aid last?

Your hearing aid will normally last 3 – 4 years, provided of course you don't damage, or lose it. We would recommend you check if your personal insurance will cover loss of the aid, if not perhaps consider taking out additional insurance.

It is also worth checking what warranty and maintenance is included with your purchase and evaluating the pros & cons of taking out extended warranty cover.

What's next?

In this series of articles we have already covered:

- Do hearing aids help tinnitus?

Coming up in the series are the following articles:

- Are two hearing aids always better than one?
- Hearing aid apps – how do they help treatment of tinnitus?
- Fitting & set up of your hearing aid – what is important?
- The phone (including hands free car phone) & TV – making life better.
- Other gadgets to help your tinnitus
- How do we think the latest research & technology trends will help?

Each of these articles is available for free for a short period of time on the Tinnitus Tunes website. However, to ensure you have access at all times to the articles plus our full sound library and podcasts we recommend you become a member – provide link to becoming a member.