

## *Answers to common questions*

Do I have deafness? What should I do? What should I expect?

Because some hearing problems can be medically corrected, first visit an ENT surgeon, especially if you have ear pain, drainage, excess earwax, hearing loss in only one ear, sudden or rapidly progressive hearing loss, or dizziness. Then, get a hearing assessment from an audiologist (a nonphysician health care professional). Many ENT surgeons have an audiologist associate in their clinic who will assess your ability to hear pure tone sounds and to understand words. The results of these tests will show the degree of hearing loss and whether it is conductive or sensorineural and may give other medical information about your ears.

Where do I go to get hearing aids?

An otolaryngologist, audiologist, or an independent dispenser can dispense aids. Ideally you should prefer a place where an ENT surgeon and audiologist are available at same place. Hearing aids should be custom fitted to your ear and hearing needs. Hearing aids purchased elsewhere or for someone else, typically cannot be custom fitted.

How expensive are hearing aids?

Hearing aids vary in price according to style, electronic features, and market conditions. Price can range from ten thousand rupees to more than two lac rupees for a programmable, digitalized hearing aid. Purchase price should not be the only consideration in buying a hearing aid. Product reliability can save repair costs and the frustration of a malfunctioning hearing aid.

What kinds of hearing aids are available?

There are several styles of hearing aids:

- Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids are placed over the ear and connected with tubing to custom-fitted ear molds.
- In-the-ear (ITE) hearing aids fill the entire bowl of the ear and part of the ear canal.
- Smaller versions of ITEs are called half-shell and in-the-canal (ITC).
- The least visible aids are completely-in-the-canal (CIC).

Hearing aid options, which are appropriate for your particular hearing loss and listening needs, the size, and shape of your ear and ear canal, and the dexterity of your hands will all be considered in deciding what type of hearing aid is the best for you.

Will I need a hearing aid for each ear?

Usually, if you have hearing loss in both ears, using two hearing aids is best. Listening in a noisy environment is difficult with amplification in one ear only, and it is more difficult to distinguish where sounds are coming from. If, however, the quality of hearing in one ear is very different from the other, one hearing aid may be better than two.

What other questions should I ask?

- Ask about charges for the hearing evaluation and dispensing fees.
- Ask about trial policy, future servicing and repair.
- Ask about the warranty coverage for your hearing aids.

What will happen at my hearing aid fitting?

- The hearing aids will be fitted for your ears.
- Then, while wearing your hearing aids, you will be tested for word understanding in quiet and in noise and for improvement in hearing tones.
- Next, you will receive instruction about the care of your hearing aids, the batteries used to power them, a suggested wearing schedule, general expectations, and helpful communication strategies.
- You will also practice properly inserting and removing the hearing aids and batteries.

How should I begin wearing the aids?

- Start using your hearing aids in quiet surroundings, gradually building up to noisier environments.
- Note where and when that you find the hearing aids beneficial.
- Be patient and allow yourself to get used to the aids and the "new" sounds they allow you to hear.
- Report any concerns on a follow-up appointment.