

Taking Action on Hearing Loss: 5 Steps to Success

Do you think you could have hearing loss? By taking action today, you can start on a course to improved health and quality of life. **Here's what you can do:**



1

Schedule a hearing evaluation. Contact a certified audiologist for a full hearing workup. An audiologist will perform various tests to find out more about your overall hearing health. This starts with ruling out other medical problems that may be affecting your hearing, ranging from wax buildup to fluid behind your eardrum. Then they will perform a hearing test to determine your exact hearing levels. Everyone's hearing is different. For example, you may hear better in one ear than the other; or you may have problems hearing certain sounds (such as high pitched voices or specific consonants); or you may experience difficulty hearing in specific situations, such as when you are in noisy settings or when more than one person is talking.

2

Listen to the audiologist's recommendations. Keep an open mind when your audiologist explains your evaluation results and their recommendations. There are lots of different solutions for hearing loss. These solutions may include

- *amplification technology*, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants;
- *aural rehabilitation*, which is when an audiologist provides strategies to help you hear better in situations where you have more trouble; and
- *external solutions*, such as amplified telephones and/or assistive TV technology.

3

Check with your insurance plan. Find out about your health care benefits for hearing aids. Medicare and Medicaid have their own requirements. If you have trouble paying, your audiologist may be able to recommend less expensive options. For example, the more expensive hearing aids offer many different features that you may not need. Loaner banks and financial assistance programs also may be available. Talk to your audiologist about local assistance programs.

4

Educate yourself. Read about the different types of hearing aids, and make a list of which ones sound like the best fit for you. Check out trusted review sites and online forums. Hearing aids have many features to meet your needs and wants. Other hearing assistive technologies and strategies can help you, too. Talk to friends and loved ones about their experiences.

5

Understand the process. For many people who are fitted with hearing aids, it's not like flipping a switch and then suddenly your hearing becomes perfect. Hearing aids are different than eyeglasses in this way. It may take a few visits with the audiologist to get your hearing aid settings just right. It also takes time for your brain to adjust to your hearing again; your brain processes information differently the longer you have lived with hearing loss. It's worth the time investment of a few appointments up front.

To find an audiologist, you can ask your primary care doctor for a recommendation, check with your insurance provider, or visit a national database of hearing professionals at

www.asha.org/profind