



# ***“I Can’t Hear You”***

## **Answers to Your Hearing Aid Questions**

**(Do I need a hearing aid?)**

As we age, so do our ears. Too often the question comes up as to whether a set of hearing aids would be helpful. The purpose of this brochure is to assist you in making the decision as to whether you should spend several thousand dollars for a device that will amplify everything, including noise.

### **WHAT IS A HEARING AID?**

A hearing aid is a small electronic device that helps magnify sound, improve hearing and speech comprehension. Unfortunately, a hearing aid does not restore a person’s hearing back to normal. There are many styles and no single hearing aid fits all types of hearing losses.

### **WILL IT HELP?**

It depends. If a hearing aid is recommended, it is strongly encouraged that you see your doctor to make sure that your hearing loss cannot be helped medically or that you do not have a medical condition that will not benefit from a hearing aid.

A hearing aid can improve your ability to hear and understand what others are saying. In order to achieve these results, you must purchase the correct hearing aid for your hearing loss, plan for multiple adjustments and have a supportive hearing aid specialist known as a “dispenser.”

### **CHOOSING A DISPENSER**

- Ask friends for recommendations.
- Check to see if the dispenser is licensed with the Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensing Practices Board (505) 476-4640
- Select a dispenser that is patient and willing to answer questions. You should never feel pressured to buy; if so get a second opinion.

As you shop around for hearing aids, use this checklist as a guide to selecting your hearing aid dispenser:

- The initial hearing test should be a complete diagnostic test including tone threshold, speech reception threshold, word recognition, tympanometry, MCL and UCL.
- When selecting your hearing aid, they must review the diagnostic test, identify type of hearing loss, discuss personal needs, cost, and ability to take care of hearing aid.
- Make sure they are qualified by asking about their experience with hearing aids, hearing test, and knowledge of hearing loss.
- Dispenser should have a variety of hearing aids (i.e.: BTE, ITE or analog, digital, etc.).
- Choose a dispenser that works with multiple manufacturers so you have options.
- Make sure they are willing to teach you how to use the hearing aid.
- Dispenser must have a written plan and procedures manual for potential infection from equipment and instruments.
- Dispenser should have the mandatory forty-five (45) day trial period to try out the hearing aid.
- All hearing aids should come with a warranty.
- Identify who honors the warranty, the dispenser or the manufacturer.
- Make sure they provide warranty and out-of-warranty service for the life of the aid.
- Make sure the repairs are covered under your warranty.
- Identify which fees are and are not refundable if the hearing aid needs to be returned.
- Obtain a purchase agreement for every purchase.
- Verify the purchase agreement includes hearing aid make, model, serial #, warranty information, cost, purchase date, future services, trial period, and nonrefundable amount.
- Ask if they provide a loaner aid while yours is being repaired.
- The office should have up-to-date equipment.

### **SELECTING THE AID**

Take your time. It is estimated that 2/3 of all hearing aids purchased are not worn. There are many dispensers and many products. In making the selection, think of it as a “car for my ears”. You don’t take the first one, try a couple of dispensers.

When picking a hearing aid for yourself, take into consideration your personal circumstances:

- The severity of your hearing loss (mild to profound).
- If you require hearing aids in one or both ears.
- Physical limitations that interfere with hearing aid insertion or control buttons.
- How visible do you want your hearing aids?
- What can you afford to pay for each hearing aid?

## **THE CONTRACT**

Before signing on the dotted line, read the contract carefully. Preferably take the contract to read in the comfort of your own home. Wait a day or two before making your decision.

When reviewing the contract, ask yourself:

- Are all costs clearly stated?
- Are your rights clearly stated if the aid is not suitable for you or is faulty? This would include the refund policy and warranty provisions.
- Will the dispenser be available to assist and counsel you after you receive the aid?

The law requires an express warranty for one year after sale.

You are entitled to a new device if corrections to the purchased unit cannot be corrected.

## **IF THINGS GO BAD**

If the devices are not satisfactory, seek continuous help from the dispenser. Most people require multiple fittings to get their hearing aid adjusted just right. If you feel your hearing aid is uncomfortable to wear, makes you sound loud, hear feedback, whistling or background noise, take some time to visit your hearing aid dispenser. Keep a record of your visits and your complaints. After a reasonable time period and the devices are not delivering the satisfaction you were promised, you have a right to return the hearing aid and receive a refund within thirty (30) days.

## **LEMON LAW**

The Assistive Device Lemon Law protects people from getting stuck with a hearing aid that is a “lemon.” If a device doesn't function and it is still under warranty:

You are responsible for:

1. Reporting it to the manufacturer, dealer, or lessor (whomever you purchased the device from), and
2. Making the device available for repair during the warranty period (by mailing it, delivering it, etc.)

The manufacturer is responsible for:

1. Repairing the device at no charge to you.

If the device cannot be repaired by the manufacturer after four (4) attempts or is out of service for a cumulative total of 30 days within the warranty period, then:

You are responsible for:

1. Notifying the manufacturer

The manufacturer is responsible for:

1. Replacing the device with a comparable device at no charge, or
2. Refunding the full purchase price, or
3. Refunding the appropriate proportion of the purchase price to the dispenser and the consumer.

### **FINANCING THE AIDS**

Some dispensers can arrange financing. Try to avoid that arrangement if possible. Check with your bank or credit union to see what loans are available.

### **RESOURCES**

State of New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, (505) 881-8824; State of NM Regulation & Licensing Department: Speech Language, Audiology, Hearing Aid Dispenser Board Audiologists, (505) 476-4640; and Better Business Bureau, (505) 346-0110.

### **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Just remember in evaluating the various hearing aids you are considering purchasing: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



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