

## Five Questions to Ask Before You Visit a Hearing Aid Center

If you suspect you have a hearing problem and are looking for a hearing aid center, congratulations. You're on your way to improving the quality of life for you, as well as those who love you.

By deciding to see a doctor, you've taken the first step to determining the cause of your hearing loss and the options you have to improve it. Because choosing the right ear health professional and hearing center is important, here are some tips to help you find the best care available.

**Understand the terminology.** Audiology is the study of the auditory and vestibular systems, which include the outer, middle and inner ear. An audiologist is a university-accredited individual who diagnoses and treats hearing and balance problems. Individuals graduating from an accredited university have earned a Masters or Doctorate in audiology and completed a one-year internship with an audiologist. In addition to conducting comprehensive hearing evaluations, they are also qualified to determine when your hearing loss may be the result of other health conditions and make a referral, as well as fit and custom program hearing devices.

The results of your hearing test will be plotted on a chart called an audiogram. The audiogram illustrates the various measurements taken during your testing, such as loudness and frequency. The audiologist uses these results to determine what type of hearing loss you have and suggests the best course of treatment to improve it.

In addition to audiologists, licensed hearing aid dispensers also provide basic hearing assessments and hearing aid devices to patients specifically seeking treatment for hearing loss. The hearing aid specialist is licensed or registered by the province in which they practice and can service and sell hearing aids.

**Do some research.** Chances are, some of your friends and neighbours already have been diagnosed with hearing loss and would be happy to recommend their audiologist or hearing aid dispenser. Ask if they are satisfied with the quality of care they received and the variety of hearing aid options they had to choose from. Does the staff keep appointments in a timely manner? Is there anything they're unhappy with or would change?

- If you have *medical insurance*, check to see if costs associated with hearing tests and treatment are covered.
- Call your *family physician* and ask if they work closely with an audiology or hearing center in your community or request a referral to the *AHS Audiology Clinic*.
- **Ask Questions.** Once you've solicited a few suggestions, call each hearing center on the list and ask some questions:

1. Is there an audiologist or hearing aid dispenser on staff? How many? Will you see the audiologist, hearing aid dispenser or an assistant during your hearing evaluation?

2. Do they offer a variety of hearing aid manufacturers and styles to choose from? What types of warranties are available? Do they offer training and education for the devices they sell?

3. If your medical insurance covers testing and treatment, ask if they accept your insurance provider. If your insurance plan does not cover these costs, ask what types of payment plans are available.

4. During your research, notice how you are being treated on the phone. Is the staff professional and courteous? Did you have to wait on hold for a long time or were you transferred several times before talking to a knowledgeable individual?

5. What do others think about the clinic?