

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids: Are They Right for You?

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Have you heard?

Hearing aids are now available over-the-counter (OTC) for people with **mild** to **moderate** hearing loss.

However, [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#) urges anyone considering OTC hearing aids to complete a hearing exam with an audiologist, noting that many people cannot accurately perceive how severe their hearing loss is. An audiologist can help you determine if OTC or prescription hearing aids will meet your needs.

Before You Buy - Read FDA Guidelines, OTC Hearing Aids: What You Should Know.

How are OTC hearing aids different than prescription hearing aids?

	Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids	Prescription Hearing Aids
Approval	FDA approved for mild to moderate hearing loss only (1)	FDA approved for all degrees of hearing loss (1)
Availability	Available in drugstores, department	Require a prescription from an audiologist

	stores, and online without a prescription (1)	or other hearing health professional for purchase (2)
Selection	Selected with the assistance of an audiologist or self-selected. If self-selected, retail staff may offer assistance, but they will most likely lack specialized training in hearing loss and assistive technology (1)	Selected with the assistance of an audiologist or other health professional (1)
Cost	Typically less than \$1,500 per pair, but varies depending on manufacturer and vendor (1)	Average cost is \$1,000 - \$7,000 per pair (1)
Fit	One-size-fits-all or semi-custom (1)	Custom-molded and discrete options available (1)
Function and Features	Fewer customization options, lower volume limits, may lack advanced features (3)	Selected and configured to match individual hearing loss patterns (2)
Setup and Configuration	Set up by yourself or with assistance from an audiologist or other hearing health professional; likely controlled with software or a phone app (2)	Configured by an audiologist to suit your personal needs (2)

Table sources

1. <https://www.asha.org/aud/otc-hearing-aid-toolkit/otc-hearing-aid-faq/>

2. <https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2022/over-the-counter-hearing-aid-facts.html>
3. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/hearing-aids/over-the-counter-hearing-aids-faq>

Signs that suggest you may need prescription hearing aids include:

- Difficulty hearing speech in quiet room during one-to-one conversations.
- Turning up the volume up so loud that it is disruptive to others.
- Trouble hearing loud sounds, like power tools, trucks, noisy appliances, or loud music.

Visit the [American Academy of Audiology](#) OTC hearing aid information page to learn more.

Find a certified audiologist in your area by visiting <https://www.asha.org/profind/>, emailing audiology@asha.org, or asking your healthcare provider.