

Your hearing assessment

If you have not been seen by the Audiology Clinic before and would like a hearing assessment, please see your GP and ask for a referral.

Preparing for your appointment

We want to ensure that you are well prepared to get the most out of your audiology appointment. The following information is designed to help you prepare for your hearing assessment. At the end of this document is a Decision Grid, which is designed to help people who have not had a previous hearing assessment consider what options may be helpful.

If you have internet access please use this link to access the IDA website: https://apps.idainstitute.com/apps/wimh_en. It can be helpful for you to bring a copy of your notes in paper form to aid discussions in your appointment.

Even if you do not have access to the internet it is helpful for you to consider what specific situations you are having problems with. This is because hearing aids can be set up with different setting for different listening situations. Knowing your hearing wants and needs will help us to advise you about appropriate program options. It will also help us to advise you about assistive listening devices.

At your assessment appointment:

At this appointment you will be seen by an audiologist (hearing specialist). We will discuss the problems which you are having with your hearing. We are likely to ask you about your general health and any related problems which you may have such as tinnitus or problems with your balance (it would be helpful if you could complete the enclosed form and bring this with you to your appointment).

A test of your hearing detection thresholds will be carried out. The test will give the audiologist a picture of the level of sounds that you are able to detect. You will wear headphones and listen to sounds over a range of frequencies (250 to 8000 Hertz); these are the frequencies most relevant to hearing everyday environmental and speech sounds.

The audiologist will explain the test results to you and discuss the options available to you. Should you choose to be fitted with a hearing aid, an impression may be taken of your ear. This will involve the audiologist inserting a foam plug into your ear canal and then putting some putty in your ear to take the shape. The process is completely painless and will enable a custom made ear piece to be made for your ear.

What is a hearing aid?

A hearing aid makes sounds louder so that you can hear them. Hearing aids are available in different shapes, sizes and types. However, all hearing aids work in a similar way. A built-in microphone picks up sound, which is processed electronically inside the hearing aid. The resulting 'signals' are then passed on to the receiver (like a tiny loudspeaker) where they are converted back into louder sounds that you can hear.

Do I have to pay for it?

The NHS provides a hearing aid free on loan. The hearing aid is yours as long as you need and use it, but it does remain the property of the NHS.

All the batteries will be provided free of charge and your hearing aid will be repaired or replaced if the hearing aid is not working. You may be charged for replacement of the hearing aid, if it has been damaged through misuse or if it is lost.

How will hearing aids help me?

Hearing aids cannot give you perfect hearing. However, they can help you hear everyday sounds that you have been missing, e.g. the doorbell or clock ticking. You should find it less difficult to follow what people are saying, making conversation easier. Watching people's faces should also help you to follow conversation. As a result, your confidence in talking to people should improve.

If you have tinnitus (hissing, buzzing or other noises in your ears or head) it is likely to be reduced when you use a hearing aid. This is because you are no longer straining to hear.

Will hearing aids make my hearing loss worse or make my ear/s lazy?

If you use a hearing aid it will not make your hearing worse. Some people are also worried that by using hearing aids it will make their ear/s lazy. By wearing aids the opposite happens, as your ear/s are able to hear sounds that maybe you would have previously missed.

Two hearing aids or one?

When you see your audiologist to have your hearing aid(s) fitted, you may be given the choice of having either one or two, depending on the type of hearing loss you have. Here are some advantages to having two aids.

Advantages to having two hearing aids are:

- Better speech discrimination, especially when there is a lot of background noise present, e.g. a noisy street or shop.
- Better ability to localise sounds (tell where sounds are coming from).
- Better overall sound quality, as the hearing aids do not have to be at such a high overall volume.

- A feeling of sound being balanced in both ears. Being able to make the most of both ears, if you have a hearing loss in both of them.
- Being able to hear quiet speech better-
- If one stops working, you will still have the other working while the broken one is repaired

There may also be other appropriate options such as auditory training (training your brain to hear better in noisier situations) or hearing therapy for advice and support.

Other support

We may also offer a referral for an assessment from Social Services Sensory Needs Team. They are able to offer advice regarding additional equipment such as special doorbells.

You are very welcome to bring someone to your appointment with you should you wish. We are happy to arrange an interpreter should you require one. We are also able to have written information translated should you require it.

Hearing Loss Option Grid: hearing technology options

Please have a look at the grid below prior to your appointment. It will help you to consider the options that may be appropriate for managing your hearing loss. The options covered are hearing aids, assistive listening devices and managing without either of these options.

<i>Frequently asked questions:</i>	Hearing aids	Assistive listening devices	Managing without hearing technology
What does this involve?	Being fitted with hearing aids and wearing them regularly. You can choose when to wear your hearing aids. Most people say that the more they wear their hearing aids, the more they benefit.	Using assistive listening devices, such as a TV amplifier, a telephone with volume control, a loop system or a loud doorbell. You can try out and use assistive listening devices to hear specific sounds that are important to you.	Not having hearing aids. You can monitor your hearing and discuss any changes with your audiologist. You can also learn ways to manage your hearing loss, such as communication training and lip reading.
How will this help my hearing?	Using hearing aids may improve your hearing, particularly when talking face-to-face and when watching TV.	Using assistive listening devices may improve your ability to hear specific sounds. For example, the TV might be clearer.	This will not help your hearing.
What should I expect?	You may need time to get used to wearing hearing aids. This usually takes about 1 month. Some people find hearing aids difficult to wear with glasses.	You will need to learn how to use assistive listening devices. Your audiologist can help you find information about these devices. You can also get help from hearing loss organisations such as Action on Hearing Loss.	Your hearing difficulties may be frustrating for you and for other people.
Are there situations in which this option will not help?	Noisy situations can be a challenge.	Assistive listening devices will only help you hear specific sounds. Some devices are not portable,	Does not apply.
Do I have to pay?	In the UK the NHS usually provides hearing aids and batteries for free.	Yes, but you can try first before paying. Some assistive listening devices may be provided free in your area. You may need to pay for batteries.	Does not apply.
What maintenance is involved?	You will need to clean your hearing aids and put in new batteries.	You will need to put in new batteries.	Does not apply.
Can I use more than one option?	Hearing aids can be used alone or with assistive listening devices.	Assistive listening devices can be used alone or with hearing aids.	Does not apply.

Editors: Amanda Hall (Lead Editor), Helen Pryce, Liz Clark, Ariane Laplante-Lévesque, Melanie Ward, Lucy Handscomb, Marie-Anne Durand, Glyn Elwyn.