

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

Are they right for you?



EVMS

HEARING AND
BALANCE CENTER

A clinical practice of EVMS Medical Group

The knowledge to
treat you better

What are over the counter hearing aids?

With the goal of making hearing aids more accessible, the federal government issued a new law allowing consumers to obtain hearing aids without the intervention or oversight of a licensed individual (physician, audiologist, hearing aid dispenser.)

The Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act includes the following requirements:

- ❑ OTC hearing aids be available **without** the involvement or intervention of a licensed person
- ❑ Intended to compensate for **perceived** mild to moderate hearing loss
- ❑ Use the same fundamental technology as current medical grade hearing aids
- ❑ Allow for user control and customization to user's hearing needs
- ❑ May use wireless technology or included test for self-assessment of hearing loss
- ❑ Available in person, by mail, or online

Are over-the-counter hearing aids as good as traditional medical grade hearing aids?

Personal Sound Amplification Products (PSAPs)

PSAPs are hearing amplifiers that look just like hearing aids, however, they are not created with the same standards or features as medical-grade hearing aids. While some people may use these devices like hearing aids, they are designed for normal hearing people to enhance their hearing in specific situations (bird-watching, hunting, listening at a distance, etc). PSAPs are not intended to compensate for hearing loss and should not be marketed as such.

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

OTCs typically look similar and have the same fundamental technology as traditional hearing aids, however, traditional hearing aids will have technology not available in OTC devices.

Traditional Hearing Aids

Some of the features only available in traditional hearing aids might include things like additional volume, soft speech enhancement, increased dynamic range, more extensive noise cancellation, wind noise suppression, echo suppression, own voice processing, custom music settings, and accessory options.

Primary Difference

The real difference is how the device is fit and programmed. OTC are self-fit using mostly with the assistance of a cellphone application. Traditional hearing aids are fit using a diagnostic hearing test and **Real Ear Measurements**. Real Ear measurements involve a microphone probe that is placed in the ear canal along with the hearing aid so that the device can be programmed to the patient's exact volume and frequency requirements. Self-fit methods are considered to be based on general estimates.

Does EVMS recommend OTC or Traditional Hearing Aids?

EVMS recommends that everyone start by obtaining a formal hearing test. It is important to identify hearing disorders that can be treated medically without hearing aids. Some disorders can even be made worse with the use of hearing aids by not addressing the underlying medical problem.

A hearing test will provide you with information regarding the type and degree of hearing loss and whether you are a candidate for an OTC, traditional hearing aid or medical treatment.

EVMS provides both OTC and Traditional Hearing Aids

EVMS has evaluated the top OTC devices such as Apple, Bose, Jabra, and Samsung. Following your hearing test, the audiologist can recommend which device(s) would be most appropriate. We also provide three simple options:

1. Be your own boss – No assistance needed, purchase the OTC device from our office or online and follow the instructions.
2. Professional set up and orientation – Allow your audiologist to walk you through the orientation and setup. (Includes downloading the app and connecting the device to your phone, service fees applicable)
3. Continued support – Need more assistance, adjustments, orientation or repair? No problem, our office is here to help. Contact our office for an appointment.



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Locations

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