



Southern Vermont AUDIOLOGY

total hearing solutions



**MAY IS BETTER HEARING
AND SPEECH MONTH**

Prescription Hearing Aids Vs. Over-the-Counter

Over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids have recently become available to patients who suffer from a “perceived” mild to moderate hearing loss. The availability and cost of these devices may seem like a convenient alternative to prescription hearing aids but they lack a number of benefits that could greatly improve the outcome and therefore the quality of life of hearing impaired patients.

DID YOU HEAR?



Comprehensive Evaluation

Without an audiological evaluation, people may misdiagnose themselves and ignore a potentially serious or treatable condition. Because hearing loss happens gradually, many patients do not realize the extent of their hearing loss and are surprised to learn it is beyond what an OTC is appropriate for. Being fit with **prescription** hearing aids begins with a comprehensive evaluation by an audiologist to determine the degree and nature of a patient’s hearing loss. If an underlying condition is suspected, appropriate medical referrals will be made.

Hearing Aid Fitting

The patient’s hearing needs, lifestyle, and physical capabilities are all considered before recommending a specific prescription hearing aid. After the hearing aids are fit to the patient, follow-up appointments with an audiologist ensure that the devices are adjusted for optimum hearing and comfort to promote success. Hearing aids last for many years so the audiologist provides regular service for maximum performance and adjustments if the patient’s hearing changes. OTC hearing aids are designed to be a one-size-fits all solution. This approach will fall short for many patients because no two hearing problems are the same. An apt comparison is the difference between purchasing reader glasses from a drug store versus seeing an optometrist for an evaluation and prescription lenses.

The team at Southern Vermont Audiology has decades of experience. Our mission is to gain patients’ trust by providing excellent audiological care according to best practice standards.

Fun Facts About Hearing

- **Your ears never stop working** - even when you are asleep. You can never turn off your ears. However, even though you are hearing while you are asleep, your brain does not process sounds the same way it does when you are awake.
- **Ears help with balance** - your ears are essential for you to maintain balance. Our vestibular system is housed in our inner ear. A complex system of sensors and fluid provide information about motion, equilibrium and spacial orientation.
- **Ears self clean** - the earwax inside your ears is actually made up of a combination of oil, sweat and dead skin cells. Earwax forms a protective barrier inside your ear canal and it helps to keep your ears clean.
- **The first hearing aid** - back in 1920 a hearing aid weighed 7 lbs and today's hearing aid weighs about 2 grams.



The True Origin Story of the Football Huddle



When American football player Paul D. Hubbard was playing quarterback for Gallaudet University from 1892 to 1895, he did so while being deaf. That ultimately led to his creation of the modern football huddle.

The huddle has been happening for a long time in NCAA college football and the NFL, and though it is not used by every team anymore, it was important to Hubbard because of the use of American sign language.

As a member of the Gallaudet Bison football team, it was quarterback Paul Hubbard's job to give the plays to his offensive teammates. But as a deaf football player, he had to use sign language to communicate the plays.

Hubbard worried that deaf players on opposing teams would know his hand signals at the line of scrimmage and steal their plays. As a result, he invented the huddle to hide the offense's plays from any opposing players who knew sign language.

Gallaudet College is a school for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in Washington D.C. Without Hubbard creating the huddle, the no-huddle offense would have been much more prominent earlier than it was.

Another one of the first schools to use a huddle in a game was the Oregon Agricultural College, now known as Oregon State University. In 1918, head coach Bill Hargass had his players stand 10 yards behind the line of scrimmage and all of the players say what they would do on the next play. That evolved into a tight circle of team members throughout football leagues.

The current trend over the last few decades has been calling plays faster from the sideline and not huddling. This gives the defense less time to rest or sub in players, giving the offense more mismatches.

Today, the no-huddle is used mostly in college football and is beginning to take over the NFL. Teams use different signals to share their plays instead of sign language. This eliminates the fear of deaf players stealing signals, though there is not a high number of deaf players in college or professional football right now.

Study Shows 1 Billion Young People at Risk for Hearing Loss. Here is how to Prevent it.

Turning down the racket is not just for disgruntled parents. A new study has shown it could protect 1 billion people at risk for hearing loss. When it comes to phones, music, movies and shows, it's common for adolescents and young adults to listen too loud and too long, according to the study published in the journal BMJ Global Health.

“We estimated that 0.67 to 1.35 billion individuals aged 12-34 years worldwide likely engage in unsafe listening practices,” and are therefore at risk for hearing loss, said lead study author Lauren Dillard. Dillard is a consultant to the World Health Organization and a postdoctoral fellow at the Medical University of South Carolina. The unsafe practices were tracked according to use of headphones as well as attendance at entertainment venues, such as concerts, bars, and clubs.

Exposure to sound at too high a volume can fatigue the sensory cells and structures in the ear, Dillard said. If that goes on for too long, they can become permanently damaged, resulting in hearing loss, tinnitus or both.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention limits safe noise levels at around 85 decibels over 40 hours a week. If you are listening for only 2½ hours over a day, that is the equivalent of about 92 decibels, the study said. Plugged into a smartphone downloaded with MP3 audio files, listeners often choose volumes as high as 105 decibels, and venues often range from 104 to 112 decibels. Fortunately, policies, businesses and individuals can put measures into place to encourage safe listening and protect hearing from damage over time, Dillard said.

The analysis of the study was rigorous and the evidence is compelling that hearing loss should be a public health priority, said De Wet Swanepoel, professor of audiology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

How to Prevent it

Whether listening on your own device or at a concert, Dillard cautioned that ringing ears is a good sign that the music was too loud. However, there are ways to prevent the damage before you notice the effects. Some devices allow people to monitor their listening levels in the device settings, she said. Some even will alert you when you've been listening too loud for too long.

“If your device says you are listening at unsafe levels, turn down the volume and listen to music for shorter periods of time,” Dillard said.

Experts cannot conclusively say which headphones are the safest for listening, Dillard said, but she did recommend using ones that reduce background noise, which may help keep the volume at lower levels.

But you do not always have control of the volume dial. If you are at a loud concert or venue, you can protect your hearing by standing farther away from speakers and taking breaks away from the noise, if possible, Dillard said. And it always helps to use some ear protection — even the foam ear plugs will do, she added.

“Hearing is the sense that connects us to the people we love,” Swanepoel said. “Taking care of our hearing is key to maintaining healthy relationships and general health and well-being. Primary prevention in young adults is critical to avoid earlier onset and accelerated age-related hearing loss.”

Patient Corner

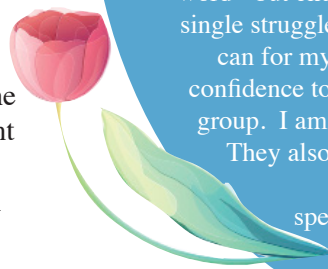


I had tried a single hearing aid five years ago and was not successful with it. This time I needed two hearing aids and wanted so much for them to work. After just a few weeks, I am so happy with them! I have gone to a crowded, noisy restaurant, to church and to a party.

Each time I could hear very well - not every word - but enough to follow conversations without a single struggle. Knowing that I am doing the best I can for myself, the hearing aids give me the confidence to initiate a conversation and to join a group. I am much more relaxed around people.

They also serve as earbuds for listening to podcasts and bluetooth speakers for my smart phone.

Mary M.

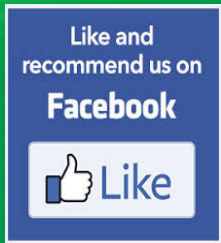


Spring Into a Happier, Healthier Lifestyle!

Experts agree that spring is the best time to start new fitness and diet changes. Spring naturally signals growth and energy. Days are lighter for longer and the extra light, especially after the darkness of winter, puts us in a more upbeat frame of mind.



Start your spring off on the right foot...or both feet! Start moving a little more and increase your intake of healthy food (e.g. Mediterranean diet). These changes not only improve your overall health, but also protect your hearing. Numerous studies have demonstrated that increased physical activity and a diet rich in micronutrients, yet low in calories, saturated fat, and sugar reduce the risk of hearing loss. **Hearing loss does not have to be an inevitable part of aging.**



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