

Bridging the Gap:

**From Hearing
Loss Diagnosis
to Effective
Treatment**

Bridging the Gap

If you're noticing changes in your hearing, the first crucial step is to get it measured properly by an audiologist. Hearing loss often develops so gradually that you might not even realize how much you're missing until it starts affecting your daily conversations. An audiologist is the professional who can accurately measure your hearing, diagnose the type and degree of your hearing loss and guide you through the process of rehabilitation. They are also the ideal providers to consult with regarding hearing aids.

Research shows that on average, people wait almost nine years after they could benefit from hearing aids to actually get them. This delay can lead to what's called "auditory deprivation," making your hearing loss harder to treat effectively in the future. So, why the long wait? What's going on?

Factors contributing towards delays in Hearing Aid acquisition*

- **Cost Concerns:** Historically, acquiring hearing aids often meant significant costs through private practices, which included both the devices and professional services. This proved prohibitive for many, leading some with mild hearing loss to delay treatment. Fortunately, numerous options at various price points are now available. Your ENT team can help determine the best level of care for your specific type of hearing loss.
- **Myths and Misconceptions:** There are many incorrect and outdated ideas about hearing aids. These misunderstandings lead to a negative perception of hearing aids
- **Difficulty Recognizing Your Own Hearing Loss:** As Helen Keller famously said, "You are usually the first person to recognize when you have vision loss but often the last person to recognize when you have hearing loss." It's common for people with hearing loss to not fully realize the extent of their difficulties.
- **Underestimating Health Impacts:** Untreated hearing loss carries significant risks, impacting well-being through miscommunication, social isolation, depression, cognitive decline, anxiety, strained relationships and potential loss of income.
- **Discomfort with Devices:** Sometimes initial discomfort, either physical or related to sound, can deter people. These issues are usually fixable with the right guidance from a knowledgeable audiologist.
- **Mistrust of Businesses:** Some people worry about being taken advantage of by some of the hearing aid dispensary businesses. Knowing your rights and the services you're entitled to is an important step to ensuring that you are getting what you are paying for. Talk to your diagnostic team about information regarding appropriate expectations from hearing aid fittings.
- **Past Negative Experiences:** If you've tried hearing aids before and they didn't work, it's understandable to be hesitant. An audiologist can investigate why those aids weren't successful and help you avoid similar issues.
- **Other Personal Circumstances:** Everyone's situation is unique, and individual factors can play a role in the decision-making process. Luckily we now have more devices and services than ever before.

* "Time From Hearing-aid Candidacy to Hearing-aid Adoption: a Longitudinal Cohort Study" - Ear Hear. 2019 MayJun;40(3):468-476

Your Path to Better Hearing: Getting the Right Information

Because there's often a general lack of understanding about hearing loss and hearing aids, getting proper education is key to your well-being and cognitive health.

Today, you have several options for obtaining hearing aids:

1. **Private Practice Audiologists:** These professionals offer comprehensive services and personalized care.
2. **Big Box Companies (like COSTCO):** These can be a more affordable option, often with a more limited range of services.
3. **Over-The-Counter (OTC) Aids:** These are a newer option for certain types of hearing loss, offering convenience and often lower costs but no, or limited, services.

The Stony Brook ENT Approach: Personalized Guidance

At Stony Brook ENT, our goal is to educate and guide you toward the most appropriate audiology category for your needs. We provide realistic expectations and often recommend a management plan with multiple options.

Before considering hearing aids, it's vital to see an ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) doctor. They will rule out any underlying medical conditions that might be causing your hearing loss and determine if there's a treatable cause. If no medical treatment is available, your ENT will provide medical clearance for prescriptive hearing aids and give you a list of local audiologists.

We suggest an additional step: contact our ENT-audiologist, Kristi Mohr, AuD, CCC-A, FAAA (**Phone: (631) 638-4142 Email: kristi.mohr@stonybrookmedicine.edu**). She can offer personalized information about the optimal type of aid (prescriptive, big box or OTC) for your specific hearing loss and budget. This can be done with a short phone call or a more in-depth "rehab audiology appointment." This guidance can help you avoid common mistakes and empower you to ask the right questions when talking to hearing aid dispensers, ensuring you get the best possible outcome

Major Hearing Aid Manufacturers' Websites



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