Why Should I Obtain My Hearing Aid Prescription from an Audiologist?

Prescribing hearing aids is a complex, detailed, and patient-specific process that requires in-depth knowledge about human hearing and communication as well as expert clinical judgment. With Master's or Doctorate degrees in audiology, audiologists are uniquely qualified to perform comprehensive evaluations of hearing to determine whether hearing aids are part of appropriate treatment. Moreover, audiologists are the only regulated healthcare provider held to stringent profession-specific practice guidelines when prescribing hearing aids.

Some hearing aid dealers and/or hearing aid dispensers/practitioners/"specialists" offer consumers hearing tests and will "select" hearing aids. These unregulated providers do not have degrees in audiology and are not entitled to prescribe hearing aids. Instead, they require a signature from a physician who can legally prescribe hearing aids. This practice, which is already disallowed for the prescription of medicine and eyeglasses, falls far short of professional audiology standards.

You have the right to be informed about the credentials and qualifications of health care professionals in whom you place your trust.

Your hearing deserves an audiologist.

Audiologists provide crucial hearing healthcare services to all age groups. To hear the most out of life, visit an audiologist.

To locate an audiologist or speech-language pathologist in Ontario, call the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (OSLA)
Tel: 416-920-3676
or visit our website at
www.osla.on.ca

Get the Facts About Hearing Aids, Prescriptions, and How Your Audiologist Can Help
What Are Hearing Aids?

Hearing aids, especially those developed in recent years, are very sophisticated electronic devices that amplify sound to compensate for an individual's hearing loss. While hearing aids are not a cure, they often can minimize the consequences of hearing loss, and can lead to an enhanced quality of life. However, just as is the case with eyeglasses or medicine, if hearing aids are not properly prescribed, serious harm can result. This is why hearing aid prescription is controlled under the Regulated Health Professions Act.

Do I Need a Prescription to Obtain Hearing Aids?

Yes. In order to protect the public, it is illegal for hearing aids to be dispensed without a prescription from a regulated professional who is entitled to perform this act. Audiologists are allowed to prescribe hearing aids; hearing aid dealers (or hearing aid dispensers/practitioners/"specialists") are not.

Audiologists are the only regulated health care professionals that are held to stringent practice standards when prescribing hearing aids to ensure that persons with hearing loss receive optimal benefit from audiologic treatments.

What Is a Hearing Aid Prescription?

In comparison to those with normal hearing, most individuals with hearing loss do not simply hear less – they hear differently. Hearing is extremely complex, and many individual factors have to be considered by an audiologist to determine specific hearing aid characteristics required to provide optimal benefit. Hearing aids that are otherwise identical in their model and manufacturer can either be helpful or harmful depending on the parameters determined by the prescription.

How Have Hearing Aids Improved in Recent Years?

Technological advances have increased the flexibility of hearing aids to accommodate far more patient-specific factors in order to improve performance. Moreover, hearing aids can be used to help treat a broader range of hearing losses than in years past. It is crucial to remember that hearing aids cannot repair any damage to the auditory system and that your audiologist is uniquely qualified to ensure that the maximum potential benefits from hearing aids will be achieved.

Which Hearing Aid Is Right for You?

A hearing aid prescription from an audiologist requires clinical judgment and involves highly individualized and evidence-based protocols that treat the person – not just the hearing loss. Audiologists work closely with patients and their families to determine which hearing aids, and even more importantly, the aids’ specific sound characteristics, provide optimal performance and communicative benefits.

Not all hearing losses require, or can benefit from, hearing aids. Your audiologist can identify other treatments which may be suitable.

How Can an Audiologist Help?

Audiologists’ expertise includes the prevention, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of audiologic problems including hearing loss, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), and auditory processing disorders (difficulty understanding speech). Your audiologist will be able to determine your candidacy for aural rehabilitation (treatments to improve hearing,) and if appropriate, perform the legally controlled act of prescribing hearing aids and/or other assistive devices to minimize the consequences of hearing loss.