



Hearing aids and devices— information to help make an informed choice

Shop smart and do your research

Choosing the right hearing aid and provider can be difficult. Before you buy a hearing aid you can protect yourself by being a smart shopper.

Always do your research first. Compare offers, ask questions, read independent online reviews on the hearing aid or hearing clinic, and take your time to make the right purchasing decision.

There are a variety of hearing aids and devices available at a range of price points. Not all of the features and benefits may be necessary for you. For example, if you simply want to better hear the telephone or television, there may be a device available to assist you.

Think carefully about the hearing problem you would like to address. Before you buy a hearing aid or device you can protect yourself by doing some research and asking the right questions.

If you need assistance, a trusted friend or relative may be able to help you do your research.

Be aware the hearing clinic is a business

Hearing clinics are usually profit-making businesses like any other store. Some hearing clinics:

- encourage clinicians to sell more expensive hearing aids by setting sales targets and other performance measures
- pay clinicians commissions and other incentives for selling hearing aids
- have arrangements that favour certain brands or types of hearing aids
- are owned by companies that manufacture hearing aids.

These factors could influence the price, type, and brand of hearing aid that a clinician recommends to you. Don't feel pressured into purchasing a more expensive hearing aid unless you are satisfied that you need it and be sure to ask lots of questions.

Before your appointment

Before visiting a hearing clinic, you should discuss your hearing concerns with your doctor to make sure that your hearing is not impacted by a treatable medical condition.

You may wish to arrange for a trusted friend or relative to join you at your hearing clinic appointment.

During your appointment

If you need a hearing aid, here are some suggestions to help you make the right choice:

- ✓ Ask the clinician to explain your audiogram so that you **understand your hearing loss**.
- ✓ Ask the clinician to discuss the range of **hearing aids and devices available** and what the **different prices are**.
- ✓ Ask the clinician about the **different features** of the hearing aid. While some hearing aids may have more features or functions than others, **you may not need or want them**.
- ✓ If a clinician recommends a hearing aid, **ask why**. If you don't understand anything, ask the clinician to repeat or clarify the information until you do understand. You have the right to ask the practitioner if they are paid more to sell particular hearing aids, or why they only sell certain brands or types of hearing aids.
- ✓ Take notes if you think you may have trouble remembering important details (or ask your support person to take notes for you).
- ✓ Ask for a **copy of your hearing test results**, including the audiogram. Having copies of test results will make it easier to shop around to find the best deal.
- ✓ Ask for a **quote, including the type and cost of any recommended hearing aid**.
- ✓ Find out if the hearing clinic offers a **free trial period**. Be sure to ask for the conditions of any free trial period, including its end date.
- ✓ Take your time to make a decision and **remember it's ok to say no**. You should never feel pressured or rushed into making a decision and you do not have to agree to anything on the spot.

After your appointment

- **Shop around for the best deal**, compare the offer you are looking at with others, and choose what's right for you. You may also want to ask about the rehabilitation and support services offered by the clinic.
- If you don't feel comfortable with the information and recommendations from a clinician, get a **second opinion** from a different hearing clinic.
- **Keep all the paperwork**. Whenever you buy something, keep a copy of the receipts and anything you sign. Make sure you keep any paperwork in a safe place where you can find it again. You have the right to ask for a receipt for anything you buy or pay for.
- You have the right to expect that what you buy does or performs as it is supposed to. If a problem arises with your hearing aid or it does not perform as promised, you may be entitled to a **repair, replacement or refund**.

Speak up if something goes wrong

The ACCC can give you information about your consumer rights and obligations, and suggest possible courses of action you can take. In some cases the ACCC or your local fair trading agency may also be able to investigate and take action when a seller or clinician fails to meet obligations under the Australian Consumer Law. Visit www.accc.gov.au or call the ACCC Infocentre on 1300 302 502 for further information.