

Definitive Guide To Hearing Aids & Better Hearing

How To Avoid A Costly Mistake By
Choosing The Right Technology &
The Right Professional...

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FREE

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Need The RIGHT Information about Hearing Loss & Hearing Aids from a Hearing Aid Specialist

We invite you to contact us personally at:

<http://www.PreferredHearingCare.com>

or call **(888) 577-2961**

We look forward to hearing from you and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Nancy Sideri, Hearing Aid Specialist





Looking for more information?

***Watch our Award-Winning Educational Video
on Hearing Loss & The Most Recent
Advancements in Hearing Aid Technology at***

<http://www.PreferredHearingCare.com>

Listen to what people are saying about this unique educational tool:

"I've decided to move forward and set an appointment for a hearing test!"

"This is the best information on hearing loss and hearing aids I have seen to date. The Virtual Consumer Seminar is a well-designed instructional video and does a better job than most doctors when it comes to informing patients about hearing loss. Everyone who is considering making a hearing aid purchase should view this Virtual Consumer Seminar"

- Susan Bryan

"I was amazed at the "look and feel" as well as the content of this seminar!"

This educational approach enables the patient to more easily make an informed decision about his hearing health needs. I wish more health care providers would take the time to educate their patients! I urge everyone with hearing loss to learn more by taking the time to look at this unique presentation.

- Kathy Henderson

"I've always wished someone had taken the time to explain this to me!"

"A hearing health care professional who cares enough to educate me in a professional and stimulating way will earn my respect and loyalty. The Virtual Consumer Seminar is very educational and easy to understand. I recommend that every patient with hearing loss view it."

- Carey Bassett



Hearing Aids & Hearing Aid Professionals

By

Nancy Sideri, Hearing Aid Specialist

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About The Authors

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Nancy Sideri is a licensed Hearing Instrument Dispenser and Aural Rehabilitation Specialist and has over 17 years experience working with hearing-impaired individuals.

Nancy began her career as a Hearing Instrument Specialist in association with Starkey Laboratories, the world's largest hearing aid manufacturer.

Nancy specializes in expert testing and interpreting scores, appropriate instrument selection and level of technology that is best suited to fit personal lifestyle needs and is an industry leader in developing a personalized interactive aural rehabilitation program specifically designed to understand your unique loss characteristics, to help you achieve your "personal best" hearing solution with integrity and compassion.

Licenses and Memberships include:

- Massachusetts Hearing Instrument Specialist License
- New Hampshire Hearing Instrument Specialist Licensed Dealer
- Member International Hearing Institute Society
- Member Massachusetts Hearing Society
- Starkey Hearing Alliance
- Acoustic Neuroma Association

1.

Getting The Most Out Of This Book

We wrote this book for consumers to make sure they receive information about hearing loss and hearing aids that could save them literally thousands of dollars in a costly mistake.

To get the most out of this book, read it carefully. We have highlighted what we like to call TAKEAWAYS that are important areas for you to read very carefully and possibly even write down so you can use that information in making a decision about your hearing loss and what you should do next.

TAKEAWAY #1 READ THIS BOOK VERY CAREFULLY!

We recommend active reading of this book. Not sure what Active Reading is? Active reading means taking notes as you read something.

This book was written based on what our patients have been telling us for many years and how they wished there was someone or something out there that could have helped them before we met.

2.

Now What Do I Do?

You have just realized you have hearing loss. You have also realized the fact that you need to do something about it. Your family and friends have probably known for years. Now what do you do? Talk to friends, look for ads in the newspaper, and research online? Where do you go? Whom do you see? What should you ask? How do you make sure you are getting the best DEAL? We will get to the answers of these questions soon enough.

In my many years of patient care we have seen and heard it all, everything from people buying hearing aids online that were actually stolen property to patients who bought hearing aids through the mail that never worked or fit.

We have found that many consumers are confused, if you start looking online (which we do not recommend), you have to sort through many different websites many of which have one goal in mind –

TO SELL YOU HEARING AIDS, that's it.

They couldn't care less about the care, education and follow up that is required for a successful hearing aid fitting that can improve the quality of life for all who wear them. There are many different styles, models, and manufacturers to choose from. The whole research process can become rather frustrating. We do understand that you need to have the right information before making a decision. Just try to make sure you are hearing it from a highly trained professional, not a website that is trying to sell you hearing aids.

3.

Hearing Aids Are Essentially The Same

TAKEAWAY #2 VIRTUALLY ALL HEARING AIDS WORK THE SAME WAY!

A hearing aid is a small electronic device that you wear in or behind your ear. It makes some sounds louder so that a person with hearing loss can listen, communicate, and participate more fully in daily activities. A hearing aid can help people hear more in both quiet and noisy situations. However, only about one out of five people who would benefit from a hearing aid actually uses one.

All hearing aids have three basic parts: a microphone, amplifier, and speaker. The hearing aid receives sound through a microphone, converts the sound waves to electrical signals and sends them to an amplifier. The amplifier increases the power of the signals and then sends them to the ear through a speaker.

Hearing aids are primarily useful in improving the hearing and speech comprehension of people who have hearing loss that results from damage to the small sensory cells in the inner ear, called hair cells. This type of hearing loss is called **sensorineural** hearing loss. The damage can occur as a result of disease, aging, or injury from noise or certain medicines.

A hearing aid magnifies sound vibrations entering the ear. Surviving hair cells detect the larger vibrations and convert them into neural signals that are passed along to the brain. The greater the damage to a person's hair cells, the more severe the hearing loss, and the greater the hearing aid amplification needed to make up the difference.

There are practical limits to the amount of amplification a hearing aid can provide. In addition, if the inner ear is too damaged, even large vibrations will not be converted into neural signals. In this situation, a hearing aid would be less effective.

Hearing aids work differently depending on the electronics used. The two main types of electronics are analog and digital.

Digital aids convert sound waves into numerical codes, similar to the binary code of a computer, before amplifying them. Because the code also includes information about a sound's pitch or loudness, the aid can be specially programmed to amplify some frequencies more than others. Digital circuitry gives a Hearing Aid Specialist more flexibility in adjusting the aid to a user's needs and to certain listening environments. These aids also can be programmed to focus on sounds coming from a specific direction. Digital circuitry can be used in all types and sizes of hearing aids.

Analog aids convert sound waves into electrical signals, which are amplified. Analog/adjustable hearing aids are custom built to meet the needs of each user. The aid is programmed by the manufacturer according to the specifications recommended by your Hearing Aid Specialist. Analog/programmable hearing aids have more than one program or setting. A Hearing Aid Specialist can program the aid using a computer, and the user can change the program for different listening environments—from a small, quiet room to a crowded restaurant to large, open areas, such as a theater or stadium. Analog/programmable circuitry can be used in all types of hearing aids. Analog aids usually are less expensive than digital aids.

4.

Choosing A Hearing Aid Professional

TAKEAWAY #3 THE SELECTION OF THE BEST PROVIDER FOR YOU IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE HEARING AIDS YOU BUY!

When you do compare hearing aids, the first question is NOT whether you want to buy analog or digital hearing aids. Or what brand or style you are going to buy or any other question about hearing aids themselves. Hearing aids are essentially all the same, so the key is finding a highly trained, experienced hearing aid professional that is right for you.

First, check the credentials of the person. Are they a Hearing Aid Specialist? They should be.

You are embarking on an adventure toward better hearing. You need to select the professional you are going to place your trust, your money, your time and frankly your hopes. This might be something you have not given much thought, but it may very well be the most important decision you make.

You are going to be spending time with this person for years to come! It is important that it is someone you feel very comfortable around and someone with whom you can communicate effectively. You will need to trust this professional to be able to openly discuss the difficulties you have been experiencing with your hearing loss and the communication difficulties it has created for you. Being open and frank about the impact your hearing loss has on your spouse, your family and friends, as well as your performance at work, is critical to your success.

The person you select should have the educational background and the practical experience you need, but they also need to be a good communicator and a great listener, capable of translating your experiences into a technical solution to resolve important communication issues. They need to be patient and committed to helping you hear as well as you possibly can. The last thing you want is a professional who is delighted to sell you hearing aids and then avoids you if you need adjustments or coaching.

Do you trust them? Would you feel comfortable referring your friends to this person? If you can answer yes to these questions you are on the right track!

Do a bit of research on the professionals around you:

- Ask for a referral from friends you know who have been successful with hearing aids. Did they respect and trust the person they worked with?
- Ask your Primary Care physician which hearing professional they refer patients to for hearing loss and hearing aids. Remember, this person reflects either a positive light or a negative light on the physicians themselves; normally they select other professionals very carefully.

If they have a business website spend some time looking around. Are they professional? Does what they say about themselves and their company fit with what you are looking for? Do they give you a clear reason why you should select them? What sets them apart from the other professionals in the area? Is their website an information resource? (This will tell you if they believe in patient education).

5.

Success With Hearing Aids Is Contingent On Good Data

TAKEAWAY #4 DON'T FALL FOR THE FREE HEARING TEST ADVERTISEMENT – NOTHING IS FREE, EXPECT A FULL DIAGNOSTIC HEARING TEST

Good experiences with hearing aids are contingent on good data. A complete evaluation is critical in hearing aid selection as well as the accurate programming of the instruments. Very few insurance companies pay for the evaluation and Medicare will only cover part of the exam if referred by a physician and is not for the purpose of fitting hearing aids. You need to have a complete exam and you should be prepared to pay for it. Expect to pay around \$100 depending on your location.

You will see “Free Hearing Screening” offers in advertising. This test is a “bare bones” check to see if you have a hearing loss and are a candidate to proceed to a discussion of amplification. They do not provide enough information about your auditory system for a successful outcome with hearing aids. “Free” tests are never free. You will either pay for them as an additional component of the total price of the hearing aid or pay the price of a high-pressure sales approach after the test.

A complete Audiological evaluation should include 4 or more of the following components:

Otoscopic Evaluation

A thorough examination of your ear canals will identify any blockage by debris or cerumen (earwax). If a significant amount

of earwax is present, your ears need to be cleared of wax prior to completing the hearing testing. Some Hearing Aid Specialist provide cerumen removal and others may refer you to your Primary Care physician or a medical ear specialist (ENT). A visual inspection of the eardrum will also reveal any abnormalities, scarring or infections.

Middle Ear Evaluation

Most commonly referred to as a Tympanogram. This evaluation looks at the mobility of the eardrum and the middle ear bones as well as air pressure inside the middle ear. This gives the Hearing Aid Specialist information on the integrity of the eardrum and if any perforations in the ear drum are present. Acoustic reflexes are also measured with this test and give important neurological information about the hearing system.

Otoacoustic Emission

Otoacoustic emission testing measures an “echo” reflected back as a sound is introduced into the ear canal. This can give the Hearing Aid Specialist valuable information about the anatomy of the ear that is essential for suppression of background noise.

Audiological Evaluation

This portion of the evaluation is what most people think of as a “hearing test”. It is administered in traditional earphones in a sound treated room. Eight or nine separate frequencies are evaluated to identify the amount of volume required for the tone to be barely heard. This is referred to as your *threshold*. This method of sound presentation is air conduction testing. It evaluates the entire hearing pathway from the ear canal to the auditory cortex in the brain. The frequency testing should be repeated with a second method of sound presentation. This time an oscillator is placed on the skull behind the ear, bypassing the middle ear and stimulating the inner ear (cochlea) directly.

Speech Testing

There is a big difference between hearing speech and being able to understand speech. A critical part of any evaluation is a

measure of the accuracy in understanding a spoken word list. This test is administered in a "quiet" situation with each ear evaluated separately and then again with both ears working together. Because we live every day in background noise, and it causes such a disruption of our ability to understand speech, it is very important that a speech test in the presence of background noise be included in the evaluation. One test in particular that is commonly used is the QuickSIn. It is invaluable in guiding the hearing aid selection process and the advisability of directional mics and sophisticated noise processing.

Before, during and after the testing expect the Hearing Aid Specialist to ask questions- lots of questions. Each person has a unique hearing history, medical conditions, experience with past amplification, expectations, social and work environment needs as well as budget. Any professional who does not ask enough questions to understand completely your unique situation and need is treating you like a "hearing loss" and will then recommend a hearing aid for the "hearing loss" not for YOU.

Once they have a complete understanding they are then able to link up your history, experiences, symptoms and needs and convert that into selecting the most appropriate instrument for you.

Watch out for high-pressure tactics and sales gimmicks. A true professional will allow you to make this decision on your own time frame. Feel free to continue to ask questions about the process or the hearing aids until you are comfortable and ready to move forward with the purchase. If you need to take time to discuss it with family, you should do that.

One of the best things that can happen during your appointment is to experience what amplification is like and what you might expect to hear with hearing aids. Some Hearing Aid Specialist will do this automatically before explaining the test results; others may schedule a follow up visit for the hearing aid demonstration.

A complete explanation of your hearing and test results is an important part of the test and your evaluation. It is not complete until you understand the results, recommendations, and all of your questions have been answered.

We recommend that you ask for a copy of your test results and recommendations, in case you travel or move out of the area. The records are your property and you have a right to have them.

6.

Purchasing Hearing Aids

TAKEAWAY #5 KNOW WHAT YOU ARE BUYING AND GET IT IN WRITING

It is important that you receive a written recommendation and it should include the information below at a minimum:

- The manufacturer of the hearing aid
- The specific model of the hearing aid
- The price of the instruments and any additional services
- The length of the manufacturer's repair and loss and damage warranties.
- Their satisfaction guarantee, including any requirements you must comply with, to return or exchange the hearing aids
- Fees that are withheld, if you exercise your legal right to return the hearing aids.

Should you decide to purchase hearing aids and feel comfortable with the professional and their office, you should ask some additional questions.

Ask the Hearing Aid Specialist to tell you about their follow up policy. You should have your first follow up visit within one or two weeks of your initial hearing aid fitting and several additional visits during the adaptation period. Depending on your hearing loss, this adaptation period could be up to six months in duration.

These visits should include detailed discussion of your experiences, the positive things you have experienced as well as

any areas of difficulty. You should never feel like you are bothering your Hearing Aid Specialist and that your comments and questions are trivial. They are there to make certain you are hearing as well as possible and you are receiving the maximum benefit from your hearing aids.

We recommend technology that uses data logging. Soon after you are fit with your hearing aids, they start collecting information that may include the number of hours you wear them each day, your volume control adjustments, noise you are exposed to and other key pieces of information.

In short, you don't need to remember everything that happens to you. Your hearing aids record much of the information that the Hearing Aid Specialist needs to make programming adjustments.

7.

Summary

TAKEAWAY #6 DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFORE YOU MAKE A DECISION

In summary, ask questions about the entire process. Make certain you are comfortable with the Hearing Aid Specialist as well as the office staff. Remember, you are going to be counting on them for years to come. If you find that any of the items discussed in this book are frowned upon or felt to be unimportant, you are in the wrong place. Keep looking until you find a compassionate, skilled and thorough professional who will provide the experience you deserve. It should be an enjoyable and educational process without any pressure.

Need Additional Help Or Advice?

Please visit us on the web to continue your learning:



<http://www.facebook.com/preferredhearingcare>



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[Merrimac Blog](#) or [Boston Blog](#)

A Personal Invitation

Sign up for a personal consultation; we can discuss what the appropriate next steps should be for your individual situation. We look forward to hearing from you.

Nancy Sideri, Hearing Aid Specialist



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