

Consumer Tips for Purchasing Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

Starting on October 17, 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rule permitting the sale of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids directly to consumers without an exam or a prescription became effective. This new class of hearing aids is intended only for people 18 years of age and older with mild to moderate hearing loss.¹

What to Consider When Purchasing OTC Hearing Aids

Make sure you understand the type of OTC hearing aid you are purchasing. Some hearing aids will require that you set them up using a smartphone. Other OTC hearing aids will come with preset programs for the user to determine which preset program best meets their needs. For OTC hearing aids that require setup using a smartphone, be sure to check if the hearing aid is compatible with Apple devices, Android devices, or both.

Look for the best price. Compare prices at different retailers—both online and brick and mortar stores—to get the best price. When doing comparison shopping, be sure that you are comparing the same make and models as they may have similar names or product numbers.

Be sure to understand what level of customer service is available. Customer service may only be available during limited hours. Determine whether customer service will be available in store, over the phone, online, or through other methods.

What is the return policy? Be sure to know the return policy, as there is no standard period of time for returns of OTC hearing aids. It may take several weeks for you to become familiar with the hearing aid and determine if it is right for you, so the more time you have to return the product the better.

Are you able to get a full refund? If you are not satisfied with your purchase or you change your mind, will you be able to receive a full refund? Make sure you understand the company's refund policy. Some companies may charge restocking fees, require that the device be returned in particular condition, or require that you send the hearing aid back using a specified shipper. Try to determine the company's policy if you exchange your original device for an alternative device and you then decide that you don't want the alternative device.

What does the warranty cover? In addition to getting information about the hearing aid and the refund policy, pay close attention to what the warranty covers and how long the warranty period is when considering making a purchase.

Be cautious of reviews. Not all reviews are truthful, and some reviewers are paid to make reviews. Be skeptical of testimonials on a seller's website and of infomercials. Instead, check with the Better Business Bureau to see if they have a good rating and whether consumers have submitted complaints against the company before you purchase a product. [If looking for ratings, consider an established and reputable company, like Consumer Reports.]

Reach out to a professional. Contact an audiologist if you require additional assistance with your OTC hearing aid. Confirm with the audiologist that they will assist you with your OTC hearing aid and how much you will have to pay before you meet with the audiologist.

Remember, **OTC hearing aids ARE NOT intended for children or for people with severe hearing loss.** Children and people with server hearing loss should consult with a medical doctor or a licensed audiologist.

New Yorkers who believe they have been misled or scammed by sellers of over-the-counter hearing aids are encouraged to contact the Office of the Attorney General by [submitting a complaint form online](#) or by calling (800) 428-9071.

ⁱ **Mild Hearing Loss:** Between 26 and 40 Decibels. Some people who have mild hearing loss may not know that they have a problem. They can still hear most of what they heard when they had normal hearing, and they're able to hear many sounds if they get closer to the source or raise the volume.

Moderate Hearing Loss: Between 41 and 55 Decibels. At this level of hearing loss, you may miss out on some of the sounds that you've heard before. If you pay attention, you'll only hear silence at times when you used to hear soft sounds.

Source: WebMD <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/how-bad-is-my-hearing-loss>