

The Buyers Guide for Hearing Aids

Everything you need to know before purchase

Digital Hearing Care
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The Digital Hearing Care Buyers Guide for Hearing Aids - everything you NEED to know before purchase.

You've found our website on the internet, chances are you are suffering with hearing loss (or maybe you're conducting a little research on behalf of a close friend or relative who is in this position). The chances are things have been building up over fairly extended period of time, most people take years before nuisance value overtakes the inertia of dealing with the problem of hearing loss.

So what are the early signs of hearing loss?

- Are you complaining that people are mumbling and not speaking clearly?
- Are you beginning to find it difficult to hear conversations when you are in a group or where there is background noise?
- Are you experiencing difficulty understanding the higher pitched voices of women and children? Higher pitched consonants such as 's','p','t','sh' and may be out of your hearing range?
- Have those around you commented on the need to raise their voices or repeat phrases when talking to you?
- Have you turned the TV or radio volume higher than may be acceptable to other family members or friends?

These are all signs that you might benefit from having your hearing checked, and you might actually need to think about the fact that you could benefit from wearing hearing aids.

But aren't all hearing aids big beige bananas that sit on the back of your ears?

If you source a hearing aid via the NHS system almost certainly, yes, you will be supplied with one, or maybe a pair, of behind the ear hearing aids like the picture to the right. For some this type of hearing aid is fine, so why on earth would anybody pay good money to purchase hearing aids privately? There are three main reasons why some go down the private route;



1. Speed of delivery and aftercare – things just take longer via the NHS, sometimes a little longer, often a lot longer!
2. Technology – it used to be said that the NHS technology lagged far behind what was available privately, that isn't really the case nowadays. The nature of NHS procurement means technology does take a while to filter through to the NHS so it always seems to lag a little behind what is available privately but it isn't too bad, depending on what type of result you're aiming to achieve. Private hearing aids should always be ahead of the NHS provision if you buy the very latest technology (which we always recommend). Beware though, some national companies in particular offer old technology masquerading as the latest
3. Cosmetics and dexterity – we can supply the same type of hearing aids available via the NHS (the beige banana BTE type) but tend not to! We find people often want to overcome dexterity issues associated with the BTE type of hearing aid or simply want something a lot more cosmetically appealing, or even invisible in some cases.

So what do our hearing aids look like then?

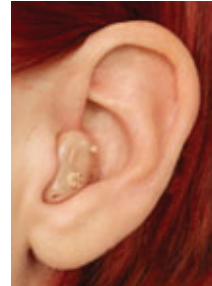


Full Shell (ITE) - ITE's are the largest custom style of hearing aid. They fill the bowl of your ear and can have the most power and features available for a custom product, although cosmetically not great.

hearing aid sizes.



Canal (ITC) - The next smallest size is the custom ITC. Harder to see than the larger hearing aids, this size takes a smaller battery but nowadays virtually matches the ITE for power and features, a good overall choice and a 'jack of all trades' when it comes to



Completely in Canal (CIC) - The CIC is the smallest custom in the ear hearing aid and very popular due to its cosmetic appeal and ease of use. There tends to be no manual controls on a CIC, remote controls are available for those that want some control over their hearing aids. Sometimes the CIC cannot be fitted due to small ear canals or very waxy ears.

BTE hearing aids have the most power and flexibility particularly for very severe and profound losses, although supplied almost exclusively via the NHS system much less so in the private hearing aid supply chain due to people's preferences for more cosmetic solutions and to avoid the dexterity issues this type of hearing aid often brings.



Behind the Ear (BTE) - This type of hearing aid sits behind your ear and is connected to your ear by a tube with an earmould.



Receiver in Canal (RIC or RITE) - These hearing aids fit behind the ear and send the sound via a tiny wire into the receiver, which is placed directly deep in the ear canal. A soft earpiece holds the receiver in place without plugging the ear canal giving a natural sound and a comfortable fit. They were designed originally for mild to moderate high frequency hearing loss but in recent years have been adapted with the advent of power receivers to be within the fitting range of more severe hearing losses. Like CIC's the RIC type of hearing aid is very neat and cosmetic.

What about all this fancy technology?

It's true to say that over the years following the introduction of digital hearing aids, the technology has come on in leaps and bounds. No hearing aid is perfect and quite frankly any hearing aid supplier that tells you that you will have perfect hearing is one you need to give a wide berth.

Having said that, the advances we've seen over the last ten years or so have been phenomenal, we can achieve so much more now than we could even a few years ago. We would normally suggest that in the majority of instances we hope to put people 80-90% back to where they once were with their hearing, the noisier the environments you are in the more difficult to cope compared to a person with good average hearing.

Why is there such a big variance in price between the cheapest and most expensive hearing aids?

As a very rough rule of thumb, the bigger the price ticket the better performance you can expect in the most difficult of listening environments, understanding speech in noisy environments.

Hearing aid technology is constantly evolving, manufacturers are constantly launching newer improving technology and it's our job to guide you through the maze. Our blog <http://www.digitalhearingcare.org.uk/blog/> always has the very latest news on hearing aid developments. We put a lot of effort into making sure we are amongst the first in the UK to announce the latest news about the hearing aid industry and our blog is avidly read by a large readership, if you want to keep abreast of the latest news please feel free to subscribe to it!

So do I need a hearing aid?

It's hard to say without arranging a hearing assessment, you might not even have a permanent hearing loss, it could be that you have an excessive amount of wax in your ear canal and removal will solve the problem. This can be the case if your hearing seems to have dropped recently, usually long standing progressive hearing loss rules out excessive wax. Either way it's good to have this checked out to find a way forward and get you hearing better once again.



What does a hearing assessment entail?

When you ask for our help we arrange a time and date to call to see you, the whole process takes an hour or so and we follow a number of steps.

1. We collect a history of your hearing, basically ask you lots of questions about where you are struggling hearing, any health issues with your ears, if you've any family history of hearing loss etc.
2. We inspect the health of your ears and ear canals, check for excessive wax, perforated eardrums etc.
3. We perform a thorough hearing test to find out the type and level of hearing loss you have in comparison to good hearing levels.
4. We explain thoroughly what this all means in laymans terms.
5. We give you good quality independent advice about the various different types of hearing aids that are available and suitable for you.

Then the ball is in your court, we've done all we have set out to do and you either decide it's right for you, or you need to think things over, or that you don't want to move forward – no obligation!

But why should I choose Digital Hearing Care?

Our hearing checks are FREE and home visits are available throughout Yorkshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. We are one of the largest hearing aid suppliers in the north of England. We are also part of a national network of independent local hearing aid audiologists so if you are outside our trading area in most areas of the UK we can recommend someone locally to you who can help.

We offer a 60 day money back satisfaction guarantee – a really strong incentive for us to make sure you are a happy customer!

The three areas we feel we excel in - PRICE - CHOICE - AFTERCARE

Price – We are very competitive, you found us via the internet and that very fact means that our prices HAVE to be competitive, you'll find the odd supplier dotted around the UK that is slightly cheaper like for like but we are happy to aim to be more competitive on price than virtually the whole of the UK!



Choice – Unlike a lot of our competitors we can supply virtually everything that is available on the UK market, this ensures we have the best chance of giving you the customer the best chance of the best possible result. We supply all the above manufacturers and more.

Aftercare – We think the last point is also the most important, it doesn't matter how much you pay for your hearing aids, if you hit a problem and your supplier isn't there to help resolve things properly you will have been badly let down and not had good value for money. Check out what our customers say about us on our testimonials page.

<http://www.digitalhearingcare.org.uk/>

If you are feeling like you want to investigate further, don't hesitate, pick up the phone and ring us now while it's on your mind! Our telephone number is **Freephone 0800 328 9628** and if we can't take your call just leave a message and we WILL return your call very soon. Email contact is available especially out of office hours and we can be contacted at help@digitalhearingcare.org.uk for advice and to arrange hearing assessments.

