



# Five things to know about over-the-counter hearing aids



Have you heard? Hearing aids are now available without a prescription. If you're looking to improve hearing loss, selecting the device that best fits your needs can help provide a more positive listening experience.

Getting hearing aids used to require a comprehensive hearing exam from a hearing care professional. In October 2022, over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids that could be purchased without an exam became available. OTC and prescription hearing aids have similarities in features and styles, but there are some key differences.

Here are 5 things to consider when comparing OTC hearing aids to prescription options.

## 1 Your degree of hearing loss

One of the most important factors when comparing OTC and prescription hearing aids is the degree of your hearing loss. OTC hearing aids are available without a prescription because they're designed for people with mild to moderate hearing loss.<sup>1</sup> Prescription hearing aids can be used for *any* degree of hearing loss, including moderate to severe.

## 2 Level of customization

How much you'll be able to customize your hearing aids will differ between OTC and prescription options. OTC hearing aids are usually less customizable since you fit and program them yourself. They rely heavily on preprogrammed settings for different environments, such as outdoors or concerts. In contrast, prescription hearing aids are fitted and programmed to your specific hearing loss by a hearing care professional.



### Tip:

Schedule an appointment with a hearing care professional to learn your degree of hearing loss. Get started by visiting [UHChearing.com/retiree](https://www.uhc.com/retiree) or calling **1-866-445-2071, TTY 711**.

### 3 Features and capabilities

It's important to know the features and capabilities that are important to you as you start looking for hearing aids. If you're wanting certain tech features, prescription hearing aids often have more advanced options, such as Bluetooth® connection. This allows you to connect your hearing aids to your phone for added control. OTC hearing aids usually have basic features suitable for those with less severe hearing loss.

### 4 Warranties and repairs

Be aware that warranties are different between product types and hearing aids need ongoing maintenance as well as occasional repairs. Because OTC hearing aids have shorter warranties, you may pay for repairs more often if your warranty has expired. Prescription hearing aids usually have longer warranties.\* If you need repairs, you can work directly with your hearing care professional.

### 5 Service and support

Different types of hearing aids come with varying needs and levels of support. If you're comfortable with technology and don't mind troubleshooting on your own, OTC hearing aids may work for you. You can tweak the settings to get them where you want on your own.

But, if you want to help make sure the hearing aids fit comfortably and are programmed accurately, a prescription hearing aid may be right for you. Your hearing care professional can help answer your questions and make sure your hearing aids are programmed to your specific needs.

Remember that hearing aids, both OTC and prescription, are a big investment. It's important to take your time and do your research to make sure you choose what will work best for you.



\* One-time professional fee may apply.

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Audiology. Position Statement: The Role of Audiologists with Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids. [audiology.org/practice-guideline/position-statement-the-role-of-audiologists-with-over-the-counter-hearing-aids](https://www.audiology.org/practice-guideline/position-statement-the-role-of-audiologists-with-over-the-counter-hearing-aids). Accessed January 2023.

Benefits, features and/or devices vary by plan/area. Limitations and exclusions may apply. Other hearing exam providers are available in the UnitedHealthcare network. The plan only covers hearing aids from a UnitedHealthcare Hearing network provider.