Things you should know *before* Buying a Hearing Device

Not all hearing devices are created equally!

Much like cars, hearing devices range in price because they have different styles and features; the fewer features that are added the lower the price.

Different processing strategies for speech understanding in the presence of noise are a feature that can be customized. As one might expect the lesser expensive products are designed for individuals who spend most of their time in quiet environments.

Some devices have several programs that can be set up for different listening situations, such as TV/music, restaurants, and the telephone. For example, Bluetooth is a relatively new feature that allows connections to other devices such as the TV or telephone, through a wireless connection for improved listening and understanding with those devices.

Additionally, hearing devices can work as a pair, in constant communication with each other, or individually as a standalone device in each ear. Hearing devices that work as a pair tend to be more expensive, although not always, and offer a more natural way of listening.

There are many different styles of hearing devices

Open-fit style hearing devices, in most cases, are the hearing devices of choice. These devices leave the ear essentially "open" to hear those sounds that are still in the normal range while only amplifying sounds that are needed.

Custom instruments are made by creating an impression of the ear, thus are specific to each individual. Custom instruments range in size, from a very small instrument that is inserted deep into the ear all the way up to a larger behind-the-ear instrument with a customized ear mold to direct the sound down the ear canal.

Two hearing devices are always better than one!

Two hearing devices provide more of a natural perception of sound making sounds more comfortable to listen to and thus more enjoyable.

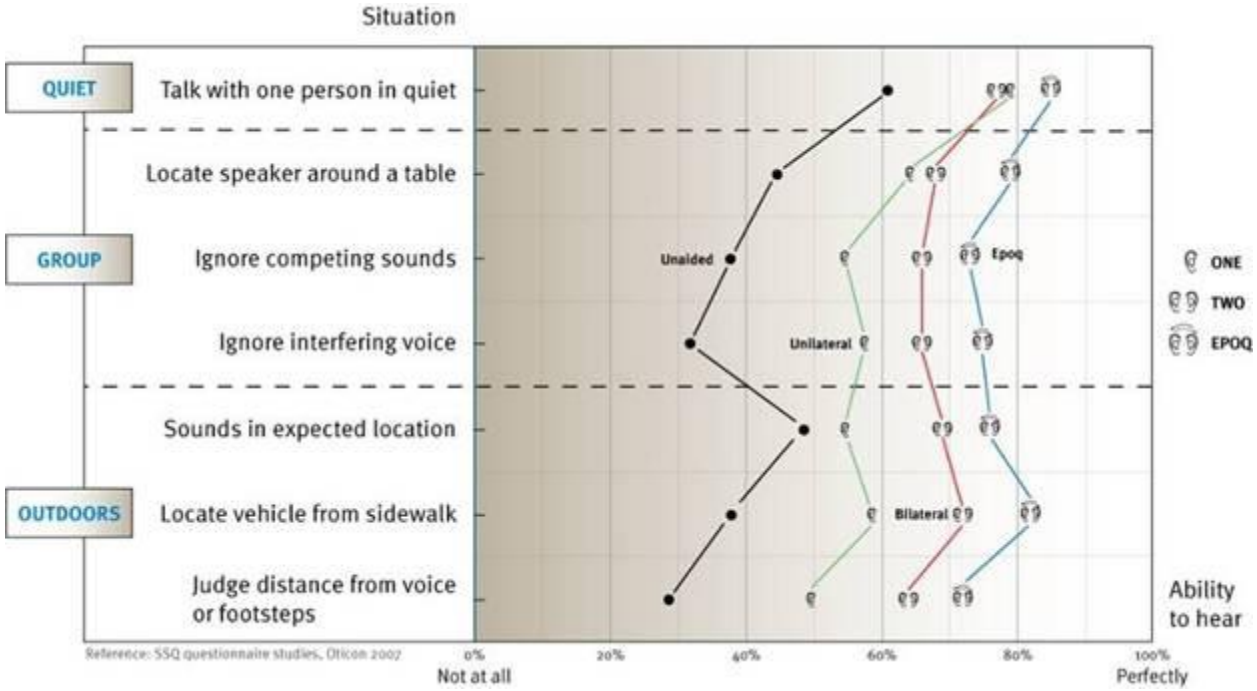
Two devices allow for less strain when hearing and give sound the kind of clarity and depth that provide a sense of space and time.

Two hearing devices allow a person to know where sound is coming from because the brain uses the information from both ears to identify the location of sound.

The ability to separate background noise and speech is managed by the brain with the use of both ears but is compromised when only one side is amplified.

Finally, one of the most important reasons to wear two devices instead of one is based on the idea of "**auditory deprivation**", which occurs when the brain gradually loses some of its ability to process information from an unaided ear because of continued lack of sound stimulation.

The graph below illustrates how hearing/understanding becomes more difficult as the environment gets noisier. Notice that with only one hearing device how great the difficulty level of understanding is vs. using two ears where there is a significant improvement.



If you don't use it you lose it! More on Auditory Deprivation

Sooner is better than later when deciding on a hearing device: A deprived ear will become lazier over time and will stop listening for sounds that it used to hear before the ear became damaged.

Many people wait until it's too late to reverse auditory deprivation. When they finally purchase hearing devices they incorrectly believe there is something wrong with the product they purchased. Often, the hearing aids get thrown in a drawer never to be used again. However, what has typically happened is the auditory centers in the brain are no longer processing sound the same.

Buying online appears to be cheaper but you get what you pay for!

Hearing devices are a bundled service: you pay for the devices, the warranties, and the dispenser's time as one price. Online purchases, on the other hand, separate these costs making it appear as though they are less expensive. You will later have to purchase those benefits that should have come standard with your order.

Other disadvantages may include losing the ability to just call locally and schedule when there is a problem. Hearing devices, like any other electronics, can and do have problems.

Putting a device in your ear that has been programmed before you get it doesn't mean you will like the way it sounds. Getting a new hearing device is a process and you will likely need several adjustments before the loudness and sound quality are what you desire.

Hearing loss doesn't have an age!

Many people believe that they are too young to wear a hearing device! But people of all age suffer from hearing loss and need something to help them hear and understand better. Many studies have shown that as hearing loss gets worse people begin to withdraw from friends and family because they are straining to understand conversation and subsequently lose their desire to be around groups of people.

The "Blue Zone" is a region of the world where people commonly live active lives past the age of 100 years. Scientists have determined that these individuals share common healthy traits and life practices that result in higher-than-normal longevity. Among these traits is socializing with friends and family on a regular basis, something that many people with hearing loss avoid.

Hearing loss can and does affect the workplace!

On October 25, 2010 “The Better Hearing Institute” released a document titled “The Efficacy of Hearing Devices in the Workplace”. In this document the following information was shared:

People with hearing loss lose as much as $30,000 annually, depending on their degree of hearing loss.

For those that use hearing devices, it was shown to lessen the impact of lost income by 90%-100% for those with milder losses and from 65%-77% for those with severe to moderate hearing losses.

The loss in income for people with untreated hearing loss due to underemployment is estimated at $176 billion, and the cost to society is estimated to be as high as $26 billion in unrealized federal taxes.

There is a strong relationship between the degree of hearing loss and unemployment for those who do not wear hearing devices.

Those with severe hearing loss had unemployment rates (15.6%) that were double of the normal hearing population (7.8%) and nearly double of those who wear hearing devices (8.3%).

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