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Dine Out With Confidence: 5 Tips

Hearing challenges can make trying a new restaurant feel daunting. Will it be too loud? Will it be easy to understand the people you want to hear? Try these five tips for hearing your best when out on the town.



- 1. Scope It Out:** Call the restaurant in advance or visit online. Exploring the menu and seating options beforehand lets you clarify preferences to ensure clearer communication.
- 2. Plan Your Seating:** Sitting away from the kitchen and other noise zones helps curb distracting sounds. Consider reserving a tucked-away booth, which can serve as a sound barrier.
- 3. Use Sound-Reduction Features:** Options vary across AGX® Hearing devices, but some offer a “restaurant” setting that cuts background noise, or you can create your own geotagged “memory” with sound settings tailored to specific locations.
- 4. Direct the Mic:** Use your AGX hearing aid’s directionality function to focus the device’s microphones on speech and other sounds in front of you versus the noise behind you.
- 5. Enlist Your Companions:** A wireless Bluetooth® microphone worn on your companion’s lapel can send speech directly to your hearing aid, or you can place the mic in a central spot for group conversations.

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KEEPING YOU INFORMED: *Over-the-Counter Devices*



With last summer’s passage of the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017, you may wonder how it affects your health care. As an AudigyCertified™ practice, we consider patient education an important part of delivering excellent service, so count on us for timely news to support your hearing wellness.

What does the law do?

The legislation, part of the Food and Drug Administration Reauthorization Act, will allow the retail sale of hearing aids for adults with self-perceived mild to moderate hearing loss — without the crucial involvement of an audiologist or medical doctor.

When will I see its impact?

Over-the-counter (OTC) hearing technology is at most a few years from being publicly available, pending development of federal regulations for safety, labeling, and manufacturing.

What are the pros of this change?

The law could help expand consumer access to hearing technology, motivate more people to seek hearing help, and inspire more technological innovations that benefit patients.

What are the cons?

Access to hearing health care is vital, but the law unfortunately will enable self-treatment for a serious physical condition that trained, licensed professionals are more suited to evaluate, diagnose, and treat.

Aren’t OTC hearing devices already available?

You may be thinking of personal sound amplification products (PSAPs), which are wearable electronic devices used for activities such as bird-watching or TV-viewing to make a sound louder — not to take the place of properly fit hearing aids.

What’s the difference between OTC devices and PSAPs?

Currently available PSAPs are neither FDA approved nor recommended to treat actual hearing loss. OTC hearing technology will be FDA regulated but won’t be available for a while.

Once available on the market, will OTCs address my hearing needs?

Hearing loss is often an inner-ear problem, but sometimes it’s a different issue such as earwax buildup, a foreign object in the ear canal, or an ear infection that may cause temporary hearing difficulty. A PSAP or OTC won’t tackle these types of underlying problems.

What else should I know about OTCs?

OTCs will address only mild to moderate hearing loss, and even then, noise processing will be far less than a traditional hearing aid. They won’t always offer a successful fit and may be less specific for your situation.

What’s the benefit of choosing provider-fit hearing aids instead?

Unlike OTCs and PSAPs, provider-fit hearing aids can address the full spectrum of hearing impairment from mild to profound. They’re already FDA approved, are recommended to treat hearing loss, and can adjust to environmental variables such as background noise as well as help your brain process sound.

Self-treating hearing loss might seem convenient, but it can do more harm than good. Professional care — including testing, programming, fitting, and follow-up — helps you get to the bottom of your hearing difficulties and secure the right solution for your communication needs.

If you have questions about OTC hearing technology, signs and symptoms of hearing loss, or the dangers of self-treating hearing problems, call us today at 931-538.4485. We’re here to help!



ACCESS *for* ALL



Working toward a world where anyone with hearing loss can fully engage at home, work, or play

With 360 million people worldwide living with disabling hearing loss, it's more imperative than ever that everyday communication moments — from ordering fast food to catching a concert in the park — be as easy as possible for all.

People and technology have long risen to the challenge of knocking down communication barriers. Check out these six examples of inclusive approaches to helping community members with hearing loss stay connected, feel supported, and be empowered.

ORDER UP

A 2003 Inclusion Solutions survey of over 6,400 people regarding drive-thru dining access and assistance found that “access is a major concern to the deaf community and others,” and that some customers “[leave] a drive-thru line in frustration” because of communication challenges.

Some restaurants have stepped up their communication game with strategies such as hiring hearing-impaired staffers, adding people trained in American Sign Language (ASL), offering live two-way-video ordering using sign language, and providing point-and-order convenience.

STAY IN THE LOOP

Many museums, churches, schools, and other community spaces have long worked to welcome all hearing levels, whether through robust use of visual signage, sign-language interpreting services, or other methods.

Some businesses and organizations have even installed hearing loops around their venues, letting users receive enhanced audio by wirelessly connecting through the T-coil setting on their hearing aids. Look for the hearing-loop logo at participating spots.



BEAM IN A BLOCKBUSTER

Cinemas are making moviegoing more accessible than ever for guests with hearing difficulties, offering options such as captions projected onto the big screen, closed-caption small-screen devices that fit in the cup holder, and outlets to connect headphones and neck loops into the venue's wireless receiver. Look for “CC” and other accessibility icons when checking movie listings online.

Regal Cinemas, one of the largest theater operators, provides closed-captioning glasses featuring subtitles and audio descriptions projected onto the lenses. The company also offers open-captioned viewing in some theaters — featuring subtitles directly on the large screen — for groups of 10 or more who make advance arrangements.

RING UP SOME HELP

Having trouble hearing phone conversations can feel frustrating, but caption telephones can turn that around. These federally funded landline devices — free if a qualified hearing care professional attests to your hearing loss and the need for a caption telephone service — shows the spoken words of the other party.

All it takes is a standard phone line, a broadband Internet connection, and electrical power. The best part? In addition to offering a flashing ringer or vibration to alert you to incoming calls, many caption phones work with telecoil-equipped hearing aids for direct listening.

LET'S GO, GAMERS

In a move that could help launch American Sign Language into mainstream video game culture, creators of the action-adventure puzzle game “Moss” have infused the hero — an endearing mouse named Quill — with some ASL skills.

The game debuted on PlayStation VR earlier this year, but a summer 2017 tweet featuring a signing Quill had already garnered instant fans — along with more than 10,000 retweets and nearly 31,000 likes as of mid-February 2018 — who appreciated the ASL inclusion.

In response to online comments, animator Richard Lico added in a follow-up tweet that the team could “consider supporting more sign-language options” in addition to ASL if the “Moss” foray succeeds.



SOMEBODY GET THE DOOR

Today's technology can turn any alerting sound into a visual or vibratory cue, allowing doorbells, smoke alarms, and other everyday household fixtures to alert using flashing lights or vibrations.

Smartphones are in on the action, too. Check the “Accessibility” settings for features such as flashing visual alerts for incoming calls and other notifications.

We, too, care about access for all and want to ensure you can fully engage with the world around you. Whether you need a hearing evaluation, customized hearing technology, or more information on innovations in public and private spaces to make communication easier than ever, call us.

We're here to help with your better-hearing journey!