

Grandma's Hearing Aid? Not Even Close!

Everyone remembers it. A hulking piece of squealing plastic attached to grandma's head. You could always hear her coming, but she still couldn't seem to hear you very well. Maybe it was because she was always turning the volume down to keep the hearing aid from whistling and squealing. Sound familiar? Maybe it was grandma, maybe it was Aunt Sally... maybe it was your mother or father. Regardless of the particular family member attached to it, this common memory keeps many people from seeking the hearing help they need. This simply should not be the case. Today's hearing aids are a far cry from grandma's hearing aid in so many ways. People with hearing loss should know that they can confidently expect hearing aids to deliver excellent, quality hearing help in a discreet package.

Discreet is Important

Let's face it. The size of a hearing aid matters to most people. The good news is cosmetically-appealing is now a term that can be used to describe today's hearing aids. The mini behind-the-ear (BTE- or sometimes called OTE for over-the-ear) hearing aid certainly falls into this category. These hearing aids are appropriate for a wide variety of hearing losses and are no longer than a standard size paperclip and no wider than the head of a standard pushpin. In addition, the mini behind-the-ear hearing aid is most often fit with an incredibly slim tube and small sized dome that fits completely down inside the ear canal. And as if that isn't good enough, these hearing aids come in a vast array of colors to match hair and/or skin tones. All of the cosmetic features of the mini behind-the ear hearing aid add up to a hearing aid that is so discreet that others are often unaware of its presence. This fact has caused them to become wildly popular. In fact, mini BTE's/ OTE's are poised to surpass in-the-ear (ITE) style hearing aids in popularity and become the most popular style of hearing aid fit in 2010.

Hearing is Key

Today's hearing aids not only look great, but they can vastly improve your hearing, as well. Advances in digital technology have affected the hearing aid market in the same way they have changed the communications market, for example. Hearing aids have literally been transformed into tiny computers, able to perform millions of calculations in just seconds. There are several new digital features available that deserve mention.

Automatic program switching has become one of the standard features in most of today's digital hearing aids. This feature allows the hearing aid to recognize which type of listening situation you're in and automatically adjust to the optimal settings accordingly.

Automatic feedback reduction allows the hearing aid to control whistling automatically. The highest end digital hearing aids can do this without affecting volume.

Directional microphones keep the focus on sounds the user wants to hear by reducing noise coming from behind. This feature is a benefit in noisy situations, like restaurants.

Wireless coupling allows a pair of hearing aids to communicate with one another and to react together.

Rechargeable batteries are a great alternative to changing batteries every 1-2 weeks. Similar to charging a cell phone, for example, hearing aids are simply placed inside of a charger every night (with the rechargeable batteries still inside of the hearing aids), and are ready to work all day the next day. Not all hearing aids have the option rechargeable power, so be sure to ask for this if you are interested in this feature.

Bluetooth connectivity is quickly becoming a gold standard. Many hearing aids now incorporate this feature. Bluetooth connectivity makes it possible to wirelessly stream sound from cell phones, mp3 players and other Bluetooth audio sources through your hearing aids.

The Future is Here

Today's hearing aids offer some truly remarkable features in some very tiny packaging. Gone are the days of the hulking, whistling hearing aid. Modern digital hearing aids allow users to maintain and confidently participate in active, social lifestyles. People won't hear you coming, but you will hear what they are saying.

Grandma would approve.