

WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY

Two different wireless technologies, **Bluetooth** and **Telecoils**, offer significant listening benefits and should both be considered when buying new hearing aids, as these features are usually not available to add later. These technologies make your hearing aids **ADA-Access-Ready**.

Bluetooth (Auracast)

Bluetooth LE Audio and its broadcast feature, **Auracast**, allow hearing aids to connect directly to compatible phones, TVs, computers, and other devices. Auracast will expand accessibility by enabling public assistive listening in places such as airports, theaters, and houses of worship once venues begin adopting the technology. Full connectivity requires all devices to support Auracast, a process expected to take several years. While Auracast is not yet in use in Wisconsin, adoption is anticipated to grow after 2027, when an international standard is finalized and more compatible hearing aids and consumer devices become available.

Telecoils

Telecoils allow hearing aids to circumvent extraneous noise in venues where assistive listening technology like hearing loops are installed. They work like ‘binoculars for your hearing aids.’ Don’t be without them. When activated, they connect wirelessly in areas that offer hearing loops. Find looped venues in the US here: [CenterForHearingAccess.org/state-lists](https://www.centerforhearingaccess.org/state-lists) For places that offer FM and Infrared assistive listening systems, the telecoil works with a neckloop and receiver provided by the venue.

Wireless technology enhances the value of hearing aids when using cellphones, watching TV, in social settings, and in public venues with installed assistive listening systems. The Americans with Disabilities Act (‘the ADA’) requires venues with sound systems to provide these assistive listening systems, such as hearing loops, FM/Infrared with neckloops, and, in the future, Auracast systems. Ask your provider for a demonstration if hearing well in large public places matters to you, and request written instructions on how to connect.

Support and Resources

You will benefit from becoming involved with a local HLAA group where experienced hearing aid users share practical advice. Visit hearingloss.org for national information, and www.hlaawi.org (for chapters in Wisconsin).

Created by HLAA of Wisconsin, incorporating elements from a guide by the Advisory Committee for Hearing Loss Awareness of the NM Governor’s Commission on Disability and the NM Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons.
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Buying Hearing Aids in Wisconsin (What to Expect)

Audiologists and Hearing Instrument Specialists are both licensed to sell hearing aids in Wisconsin. Both are trained to test hearing, fit, and adjust modern hearing aids. Most audiologists hold a doctoral degree. They interpret test results and use advanced testing to decide if further medical consultation is needed. Hearing instrument specialists are trained to recognize problems and refer clients to an audiologist or medical doctor. Your primary care provider or satisfied hearing-aid users you know can help you choose a professional. Choose a provider who follows ‘Best Practices’ in hearing care.

THE HEARING EVALUATION

A screening or hearing exam: A hearing screening is a brief pass/fail test that indicates whether more testing is needed. A comprehensive exam, ideally conducted in a soundproof booth, determines the type of hearing loss and must be completed before fitting hearing aids. A full examination includes a test of your ability to understand spoken words in quiet, your ability to tolerate loud sounds, and must include Speech-in-Noise testing. Note: It is beneficial to bring a significant other to your hearing evaluation.

Your audiogram: A chart showing your hearing test results. Pure-tone audiometry measures the quietest sounds you can hear at different pitches and shows your ability to understand words in quiet and noisy settings. These results guide accurate hearing-aid fitting.

TYPES OF HEARING LOSS

Sensorineural Hearing Loss - Sensorineural hearing loss occurs when the cochlea or auditory nerve is damaged, preventing clear sound signals from reaching the brain. Though usually permanent, sensorineural loss can often be improved with well-fit modern hearing aids and, in cases of severe hearing loss, with a cochlear implant.

Conductive hearing loss - Conductive hearing loss happens when outer or middle-ear issues block sound from reaching the inner ear. Common causes include infections, earwax, fluid, eardrum damage, or abnormal bone growth in the middle ear. An exam by an Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) specialist is strongly recommended.

Mixed Hearing Loss - Mixed hearing loss combines sensorineural and conductive types. The sensorineural part is usually permanent, but the conductive part may be temporary; an ENT examination is generally advised.

What the hearing care provider should review with you and your significant other:

- Your audiogram and speech-in-noise test results.
- Explain why you can hear but not always understand.
- Talk about your lifestyle and how hearing loss affects it.
- Discuss whether you are a hearing-aid candidate and what to expect in key listening situations that are important to you.

HEARING AID FEATURES and OPTIONS

Based on your test results, lifestyle, preferences, and budget, your provider should recommend hearing aids that best fit your needs and help you set hearing-aid goals.

Types of hearing aids: Styles include behind-the-ear, in-the-ear, open-fit, completely-in-canal, and extended-wear—each offering distinct options and benefits. Your test results, personal preferences, and budget guide the selection of hearing aids. Some providers also sell or may recommend trying over-the-counter devices first.

Features may include

- **Directional microphones that focus on sounds in front of you.**
- **Telecoils** are small, inexpensive copper coils built into many hearing aids. They receive sound wirelessly from assistive listening systems in use worldwide.
- **Auracast Bluetooth**, a new technology that can connect hearing aids wirelessly to cellphones, TVs, clip-on mics, and soon to Auracast Broadcast Assistive Listening Systems.
- **Remote controls or smartphone apps** that allow easy adjustments.
- **Special programs** that enhance listening in cars, with music, and in group settings.
- **Rechargeable or disposable batteries.**
- **Manual or automatic volume and program controls.**

HEARING AID DISPENSING

Fitting: When the new hearing aids are delivered, your provider should show you how to:

- Place them correctly in your ears.
- Access customized programs for your lifestyle.
- Use the telecoil feature in real-life situations.
- Install or charge batteries.
- Clean, store, and care for your hearing aids.

Counseling at the Time of Dispensing

During the hearing aid fitting appointment, your provider should:

- Provide guidance on adjusting to new sounds.
- Offer strategies for hearing better in different situations.
- Teach you when and how to use each program and provide written instructions to review at home.
- Explain how to manage earwax in your ears and hearing instruments.
- Encourage you to return regularly for adjustments and fine-tuning appointments.
- Share information about services available through state or community organizations and recommend local or national hearing loss support groups – see last page under Support and Resources.

HEARING AID VERIFICATION AND VALIDATION MEASURES

Verification: During the fitting, your provider should perform Real-Ear Measures (REM) to confirm proper function and accurate sound levels for audibility and comfort. The REM test is the only objective way to verify ear sound levels and is part of the recommended ‘Best Practices.’

Validation means assessing if your hearing aids meet your listening needs and goals, and what else, if anything, can be done to improve your ability to hear in important situations in your life. This occurs after a few weeks of use, which still allows time to decide whether to keep or return them.

Sales Contract: Wisconsin law requires that you receive a written contract when purchasing hearing aids. The contract must list the make and model of the hearing aids, include full financial terms of the sale, and specify a trial period of at least 30 days.

Trial Period: Ask your provider whether a longer trial period is available. Use this time to test your hearing aids in different environments and ask any questions you may have. The trial period allows you to evaluate how well your hearing aids meet your needs before making a final decision.

Returning your hearing aids: State law also requires that if you return the hearing aids during the mandated trial period, you must be given a refund within 30 days of the return date, minus any agreed-upon charges as specified in the written contract.

Complaints: If you are unable to resolve a problem with your hearing aids or with your hearing care provider, you may file a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services. Call the department toll-free at 877-617-1565 or file a complaint online at <https://dsps.wi.gov/Pages/SelfService/FileAComplaint.aspx>