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INFORMATION FROM
Associated Audiologists, Inc.
"Hearing Your Best for Life"



Hearing Your Best

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Innovations in Hearing Technology

There's great news for those who wear hearing aids! Technology continues to advance, making new options available for our patients. Here are three innovations we want you to be aware of.

Auracast

Auracast "broadcast" is a new type of Bluetooth technology that should improve assistive listening and the functionality of hearing aids. If you're a current hearing aid wearer, your hearing aids use traditional Bluetooth to listen to phone calls or stream audio to your hearing aids, which requires a direct pairing and is only available in specific phones and tablets.

Auracast is a Bluetooth feature that essentially will allow a source device, like a TV or speaker, to broadcast one or more audio streams to an unlimited number of audio receivers such as earbuds, speakers or hearing aids.

It is universally accessible and available both with and without a Smartphone. It also requires less power than needed for current Bluetooth streaming, which means that the hearing aid battery drain is much lower when using Auracast than traditional Bluetooth. You will begin to see this very new feature available in the coming years as hearing aids, computer technology, headphones, earbuds and public venues begin to implement this exciting technology.



Phonak Audeo Sphere Infinio

This new hearing aid from Phonak offers improved speech clarity from any direction, helping to filter out noise from speech, allowing engagement with friends, family members or colleagues even in the noisiest environments. It is the world's first hearing aid with a dedicated deep neural network (DNN) chip. This chip expands the listening range of the wearer in all directions. It also offers agile universal connectivity that can keep up with your active lifestyle. Due to the advanced features, it can require more battery use and compared to other models, the size may be larger.

Apple AirPods

The Food and Drug Administration has approved Apple's new "Hearing Aid Feature," which basically can turn AirPods into over-the-counter/non-prescription hearing aids, amplifying sounds for people with perceived mild-to-moderate hearing loss. Individuals with more severe hearing loss should still use prescription hearing aids. The Apple feature, available via a free software update, will only work with AirPods Pro 2 or newer ear buds and iOS 18-compatible iPhones or iPads.

For more information about any of these innovations, talk with your audiologist.

HEAR HERE

Tim Steele, Ph.D.,
President and CEO

What if you knew that one day in the near future you would completely lose your ability to hear? Would you do anything different now? Would you savor the sounds and voices you cherish before you could no longer hear them? This may seem like an exaggerative exercise, but it actually happened to Matt Hay.

Matt has a rare condition called neurofibromatosis type 2 (NF2), which causes tumors to grow on nerve tissues. It can be especially aggressive in the auditory nerves, causing deafness in both ears as tumors eventually shut down all hearing.

Matt was in college when he learned that he would eventually become deaf. So, he embarked on a personal challenge to soak up sound, as much as he could, especially music. He didn't miss concerts or conversations. As the day finally arrived when Matt knew his hearing was fading, he spent an evening out for dinner with his wife, making her laugh as much as he could. He wanted to memorize her infectious laugh while he could still hear her.

Unfortunately, the next day his hearing was gone. Matt couldn't even hear his own voice. It was a very dark and lonely time, but eventually he was able to benefit from one of the first brainstem implants. This helped restore some of his ability to hear but required years of auditory rehabilitation.

Matt provided an inspirational keynote address at this year's Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA) meeting. He actually called it a "thank you note" instead of a "keynote." As he spoke to a room packed with audiologists, there wasn't a dry eye in the house. There were many take-aways from his speech, but three stood out to me.

- ▶ First, the vocation of audiology is a noble one. We work with individuals experiencing the challenges posed by hearing loss, tinnitus and dizziness/vertigo/balance. Audiology provided Matt hope during his difficult journey of gradual hearing loss and eventual hearing recovery.
- ▶ Second, we shouldn't take the current hearing and balance we enjoy for granted. After Matt's brainstem implant, everything sounded like a bottle cap in a garbage disposal. Can you imagine? It took years of hard work to recover as much hearing as possible, aided by the years of auditory stimulation he invested in prior to his complete loss of hearing.
- ▶ Third, staying positive and pushing ourselves to improve through therapy or rehabilitation can pay off. Matt not only battled returning to functional hearing, but he also recovered from debilitating facial paralysis after the brainstem implant. Matt also learned to walk again after painful spinal tumors were surgically removed.

Through his experiences with NF2, Matt has become a passionate activist for hearing and a fierce advocate for rare diseases. I find Matt's life inspirational and look forward to reading his book which is a memoir called "Soundtrack of Silence." If you are so inclined, you might also enjoy learning more about Matt and his life journey.

My best recommendation right now, though, is to enjoy your favorite sounds, sounds you may take for granted—the birds singing, the wind blowing through the trees, a favorite song playing on the radio, or like Matt, the voice of a dear loved one. I trust it will be a joyful experience.



Red Scarf Reminder

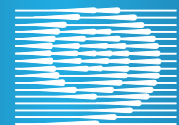
The Red Scarf Project is a multi-faceted charity program that benefits foster youth once they "age out" of the system and go to college. The organization accepts donations of hand-knitted or crocheted red scarves, which are given to college-age students on Valentine's Day each year.

This year, Associated Audiologists is collecting scarves until Dec. 1, 2024. Scarves can be dropped off at any of our eight clinics.

If you miss the Dec. 1 deadline, don't worry. We'll continue to collect scarves throughout the year and will include yours with our next donation.

For more information, call 913-498-2827.

You also can find Red Scarf project details and patterns at: <https://www.fc2success.org/programsmentoring-and-support/red-scarf-project/>.



ASSOCIATED
AUDIOLGISTS

We are on a mission:

To improve lives
through comprehensive
audiology care.



Medicare Enrollment Form

INSURANCE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Hearing loss affects one in three people ages 65 to 74, according to the National Institutes of Health. And while hearing aids can greatly improve quality of life, they can be a significant expense for older adults. If you're on Medicare, you might wonder what's covered, so here are some common questions we hear from patients and our answers.

Does Medicare pay for hearing aids?

Original Medicare does not cover the cost of hearing aids, routine hearing tests or exams for hearing aid determination/adjustments/fittings.

If you have Medicare, you should expect to pay out of pocket for prescription or over-the-counter hearing aids. Prescription hearing aids may cost anywhere from \$1,500 to \$6,000 a pair, depending on the level of technology and services included with your devices. Remember, prescription hearing aids are custom-fit and programmed for your specific hearing loss.

You also should budget to pay out-of-pocket for hearing aid maintenance, fittings, adjustments, cleanings and follow-up exams, as Medicare doesn't cover these either as they are related to a hearing aid and don't meet Medicare's requirements under their definition of "medical necessity."

Medicare Part B will cover diagnostic hearing and balance testing if it's for the purposes of diagnosing a medical condition. To cover testing, the patient must present with:

- ▶ A concern or symptom such as decreased hearing.
- ▶ Increased tinnitus.
- ▶ Dizziness or balance problem.
- ▶ Pain or fullness in the ear, etc.

Medicare won't cover testing for the purposes of:

- ▶ Adjusting a hearing aid.
- ▶ Buying a new hearing aid.
- ▶ Confirming hearing for entrance into a profession such as truck driving, interpreting or military service.

In some instances, an order from your physician may be necessary. Our staff can discuss the requirements with you based on your symptoms and appointment type.

Some private insurers cover the cost of new hearing aids IF the patient meets all of their criteria. Unfortunately, none

of these plans are consistently providing coverage for routine hearing aid maintenance because it isn't considered a "medical necessity," and none of them cover manufacturer parts/repairs because these are performed by a third party.

Does Medicare Advantage (Part C) pay for hearing aids?

Some Medicare Advantage plans provide some hearing aid benefits, but coverage varies.

You may have per-device dollar limits for hearing aid purchases, as well as copayments or coinsurance for services. Some plans may require you to use in-network providers or specific hearing aid brands and these plans can be difficult for patients to navigate.

For example, your plan may state you can get new hearing aids, but the new hearing aids it covers are less sophisticated than the ones you currently wear, and to receive coverage, you may have to see an audiologist you've never seen before. So, before signing up for one of these plans, be sure to read the fine print and check with our team to verify if there is an actual benefit to you.

Legislative Support to Help with Hearing Care

Finally, there is legislation in the works that may provide Medicare recipients with some financial relief by reducing red tape and unnecessary appointments. The Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act is a bill that's currently making its way through Congress and has bipartisan support.

It seeks to expand Medicare coverage of diagnostic and treatment services provided by audiologists without the need for a physician order. It also would re-classify audiologists as practitioners under the Medicare statute, aligning the profession with other doctoral-level providers.

Associated Audiologists has a team dedicated to helping you maximize your budget. In addition, we have developed highly competitive pricing for individuals who would prefer to pay cash for their devices, rather than deal with the red tape and approvals necessary to meet many insurance plans' requirements. Some of these pricing plans include warranty/repairs, follow-up visits and adjustments.

Be sure to check with us for the many options we have available if you are considering the purchase of new hearing aids. We also can check your current plan or a plan you are considering to help you determine the value of benefits.

Manhattan Clinic Update

As some of you are aware, Dr. Mandie Saylor's husband, Jeff, who served in the U.S. Army at Fort Riley, had a serious accident while on duty last year.

Due to unexpected service changes, they needed to relocate in July prior to his medical discharge. They recently moved to Rhode Island to be closer to family.

Dr. Saylor was a valuable member of our team and we know you join us in wishing her all the best. In addition, we would like to thank Jeff for his service to our nation. They also recently welcomed a healthy baby into their family.

To continue providing outstanding care to our Manhattan patients, several members of our Associated Audiologists team who are familiar with the community have stepped up. They include:

- ▶ David Paul, Au.D.
- ▶ Katelyn Waldeier, Au.D.
- ▶ Jonathan York, Au.D.

These audiologists are joined by Teresa Garcia, our new administrative assistant in the Manhattan Clinic. Teresa grew up in Clay Center, Kansas. She has two adult daughters and five grandchildren, all who live in the area. She enjoys camping, hiking and attending college football and basketball games, along with spending time with her furry buddy, Scout. Please make sure to welcome her.

And last, but not least, our extern, Molly Whitely, is spending two days a week with our Manhattan Clinic



team where she's completing her professional training. In addition, she has recently accepted the full-time audiology position at our Manhattan Clinic following completion of her degree requirements and licensure.

Molly grew up in Abilene, Kansas. She attended Kansas State University in Manhattan where she earned her undergraduate degree in communication sciences and disorders. Currently, she is completing her doctoral degree in audiology at the University of Kansas Medical Center and anticipates graduating in May 2025.

Molly is recently married and currently lives in Lenexa with her husband and two dogs, Maverick, a golden retriever, and Willie, a cavapoo. They will all be moving to Manhattan as Molly and her husband transition into new positions in the spring/summer of 2025. Molly also enjoys spending time at the lake, cheering on the Wildcats and hanging out with family.

Give us a call at 785-539-7361 to schedule an appointment with a member of our Manhattan team, or visit us online at hearingyourbest.com.



Randi Cole Places First

Congratulations to our long-time patient, Randi Cole, Mrs. Kansas United States 2019, on placing first runner-up in the 2024 Mrs. USA Pageant conducted in August 2024 at the Scottish Rite Theater in Omaha, Nebraska. Associated Audiologists helped to sponsor Randi in the competition.

Randi has experienced both hearing loss and extreme dizziness, receiving help from Dr. Dana Jacobson and Dr. Danielle Dorner. Today she wears a cochlear implant. Because of her experience, Randi made hearing loss her platform and brought attention to it during the pageant.

"I want to sincerely thank Associated Audiologists for their support and for the outstanding care they have provided me over the years," Randi said. "This practice is simply the best!"

Three Ways to Improve TV Listening this Holiday Season

Are you planning to purchase a new television this holiday season, but you also have hearing loss? It's exciting to think about watching your favorite programs on that 85" screen, but no matter what the screen size, you may be surprised to find you still struggle to hear every word.

Why bigger isn't always better.

Unfortunately, if you have hearing loss, bigger isn't always better. Many people who wear hearing aids have trouble hearing their new flatscreen TVs. That's because despite the larger size and amazing picture, new televisions have small speakers designed to fit in tight spaces. In fact, the speakers may not even be located on the front of the TV. Instead, they may be found in the back or on the sides, which means they aren't projecting the sound into the room toward the listener. They're projecting sound into the wall, which can muffle the audio and make it tough to understand.

In addition, many movies were originally sound engineered for movie theatres, not family rooms. That means the sound can become distorted if the movie hasn't been re-engineered for the small screen, and most have not.

Also, some movies and programs were originally created in other countries and have been dubbed with English-speaking voices, think the classic out-of-sync Godzilla movies of the '50s and '60s. This makes it hard to understand what's being said, especially if you rely on lip-reading.

If you try turning the volume up on your television, it can sometimes make speech sound distorted and may be even more difficult to understand. Plus, cranking the sound up on your TV may not be easy for others in the room to tolerate.

So, what's the best solution? We have three suggestions you may find helpful.

1. Turn on closed captioning. Some people don't care for closed captioning because it obstructs some of the video, but it can improve your ability to understand spoken dialogue, plus, it's free. Congress has required all digital televisions with screens over 13" to offer closed captioning since 2006. Since 2012, cable operators, satellite distributors and online providers also are required to provide closed captioning.

To turn closed captioning on, look for the button on your remote control with the "CC" icon. This button should allow you to turn closed captioning on and off. If you stream content from Netflix or Prime, for example, you may need to turn the closed captioning on in those apps.



2. Add an external sound system or a soundbar to your television to improve your listening experience. Because flatscreen televisions typically don't have great speakers, a soundbar that projects into the room helps the audio reach your ears and if you wear hearing aids, their microphones. Costs can vary widely, depending on your budget and the type of experience you'd like, plus soundbars can make a great gift. Soundbars are available at most retailers that sell televisions or can be found online.
3. If you wear hearing aids, check into a TV streaming device, like Widex TV Play or SoundAssist. The streamer wirelessly connects your television and your prescription hearing aids using a Bluetooth signal. This enables you to stream sound directly to your prescription hearing aids at a volume you enjoy while the rest of the room can listen to television at the sound level they like. You also can put the television on mute and stream sound directly to your hearing aids so that only you can hear the TV. These devices are available at Associated Audiologists.

So, if a new big screen television is on your "wish" list and you have hearing loss, don't be surprised if you have problems understanding the audio. If you notice you're having problems hearing, talk with a doctoral-level audiologist about all the assistive listening options available. Your audiologist is not only an expert in prescription hearing aids and assistive listening technology, but is an expert in your hearing loss. Using your hearing profile, they can make recommendations for your specific needs, and can best explain how each type of technology works, as well as any costs involved.

Overland Park Clinic Renovations



In an effort to improve your patient experience, our **Overland Park Clinic** recently underwent an update. If you haven't been in, stop by and check it out. We think you'll love it!

Team Attends ADA Conference

Several members of the Associated Audiologists team recently attended the Academy of Doctors of Audiology, learning about the latest developments in audiology and connecting with other professionals. Representing Associated Audiologists were: **Dr. David Nissen, Dr. Dana Jacobson, Dr. Jonathan York, Dr. Stacey Baldwin, Dr. Tim Steele, Dr. Katie Rhoads, Dr. David Paul** and **Dr. Susan Smittkamp**.



East Clinic Celebrates 5 Years

Where has the time gone? It's been five years since we opened our **East Clinic** at 4721 South Cliff Avenue, Suite 201, Independence. **Dr. Travis Hopkins Williams** is our dedicated audiologist at this location.



Congratulations to our East team, assisted by Megan at the front desk. They have helped hundreds of patients over the past five years hear their best!



Dr. Paul Selected KSHA Treasurer

Dr. David Paul was selected as treasurer for the Kansas Speech and Hearing Association at the organization's meeting in Wichita, Kansas, Sept. 26-27. Dr. Paul will be responsible for overseeing KSHA's financial status. He is a long-time

member of the Associated Audiologists team who sees patients at our Leavenworth, Lawrence and Manhattan Clinics. Congratulations Dr. Paul!

Associated Audiologists Provides Support for Next Generation of Audiologists



Associated Audiologists is proud to sponsor the research projects of two doctorate of audiology students, Karlie Snyder, University of Kansas Medical Center, and Courtney Harris, Wichita State University. The sponsorship presentation was made at the Kansas Speech and Hearing Association meeting in Wichita, Kansas, Sept. 26-27. Attending from Associated Audiologists were **Dr. Sarah Jo Mediavilla, Dr. Abigail Kelly, Dr. Linda Erickson, Dr. Lisa Battani** and **Dr. Katelyn Waldeier**.

Happy Anniversary! Celebrating 10 years with Associated Audiologists are:

- ▶ **Dr. Lisa Battani**, our hearing aid program director who sees patients at our Shawnee Mission Clinic.
- ▶ **Dr. Travis Hopkins Williams**, our lead audiologist at the East Clinic.
- ▶ **Dr. Danielle Dorner**, our vestibular audiologist. She performed her externship with Associated Audiologists in the spring of 2014.
- ▶ **Nicole Sweet**, the lead administrative assistant in our Overland Park Clinic. Nicole has worked in both our Overland Park and East Clinics.



Celebrating 5 years with Associated Audiologists are:

- ▶ **Carlotta Brass**, assistant accounting coordinator.
- ▶ **Steve Riddle**, chief financial officer.
- ▶ **Kerry Magee**, our Prairie Village administrator.

Congratulations!

- ▶ **Kacie Malin** has moved into a new role with our Shawnee Mission Clinic as a certified audiology assistant. Kacie helps the audiologists by performing maintenance on patients' hearing aids at clinic appointments, as well as assisting with hearing aids brought in through Urgent Ear.
- ▶ **Jennifer Dennis** recently joined our team as a business support associate.
- ▶ **Dr. David Paul** and **Dr. Katelyn Waldeier** were selected as the "Best Audiologists in Leavenworth" in the Leavenworth Times' annual readership poll.

Getting Used to Wearing Prescription Hearing Aids

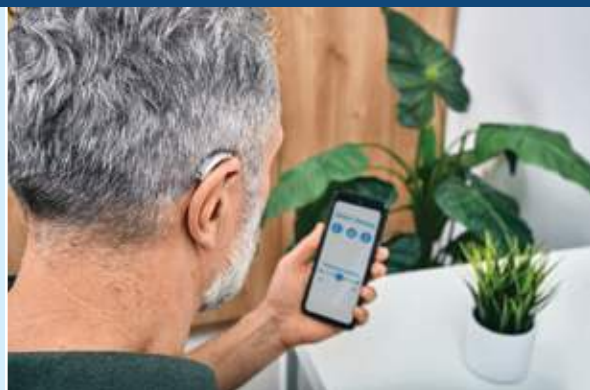
Though prescription hearing aid technology is more advanced than ever, some still have difficulty getting used to wearing their hearing aids.

Here are some tips from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) to help you get the most benefit from prescription hearing aids, especially if you're a new hearing aid wearer.

- ▶ Wear them daily during most waking hours with the exception of times when they may get wet or when you are exposed to loud sounds, such as power tools or firearms. If you take them off for any length of time, your brain will adjust back to not wearing them. This can slow your progress.
- ▶ Wear your prescription hearing aids even if you are alone and/or in quiet environments. You will be reteaching your brain to hear and listen to soft environmental sounds that you have been missing.
- ▶ Wear your prescription hearing aids in noisy places to assist with communication. New hearing aid technology has digital processing that helps to reduce background noise to a more comfortable level.
- ▶ Don't compare your hearing aid experiences with those of others. Hearing is a very individual experience. Some people adjust to listening with prescription hearing aids shortly after their fitting, whereas others need more time to adjust to new sounds.
- ▶ Contact your audiologist right away if you get whistling or feedback from your hearing aids or you experience any discomfort when wearing your hearing aids.

It can take time to adjust to wearing prescription hearing aids. Be sure you have a follow-up appointment scheduled with your audiologist. At that appointment, your audiologist can check your hearing aids and reprogram them if necessary, or provide additional recommendations to help you adjust to them.

To learn more about the latest hearing aid technology and the many benefits of hearing your best, schedule an appointment with your audiologist.



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Help Us Stay on Time, Every Time

No one likes to spend their time sitting in a waiting room. At Associated Audiologists, we make every effort to minimize your wait by reserving your appointment time to work with **ONLY** you.

You can help us stay on schedule so that we can see you in a timely manner by:

- ▶ Arriving a few minutes early for your appointment.
- ▶ Having your photo ID and insurance cards ready.
- ▶ Completing any paperwork in advance and bringing it with you.

If you're running late or can't make it to your appointment, please call to notify our staff. This helps us keep our clinics running on time for all patients.