

State Agencies

Department of State

The Department of State licenses and regulates hearing aid dispensing businesses and individuals. Questions regarding any aspect of hearing aid dispensing may be directed to the number below. The Department's website contains the current law and regulations pertinent to hearing aid dispensing, as well as frequently asked questions.

Hearing Aid Dispenser Information:
(518) 474-4429

Complaint Hotline (toll-free; voice/TTY):
(877) 545-5864

Website: www.dos.state.ny.us

NYS Education Department

The State Education Department licenses and regulates physicians and audiologists. Questions regarding audiologists should be directed to 800-442-8106. Questions about physicians should be directed to (518) 474-3817.

Audiologist Information: (518) 474-3817, ext. 100

Physician Information: (518) 474-3817, ext. 560

Complaints: (800) 442-8106

Website: www.op.nysed.gov

Consumer Protection Board

The Consumer Protection Board is an Executive Agency under the direction of the governor charged with advocating on behalf of all New York consumers. Consumers with questions about hearing aid sales, contract negotiations and warranty specifics or any consumer-related issue may contact the Consumer Action Hotline.

Consumer Action Hotline: (800) 697-1220

Website: www.consumer.state.ny.us

NYS Department of Health

The NYS Department of Health strives to protect and promote the health of New Yorkers through prevention, science and the assurance of quality health care delivery.

Website: www.health.state.ny.us



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David A. Paterson
Governor

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Secretary of State



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Consumer Guide for Purchasing Hearing Aids

IN NEW YORK STATE



You've been told you do not hear well and you've decided to do something about it.



You have many unanswered questions:

- Do you need a hearing aid?
- Where do you go to get your hearing evaluated?
- What kind of aids should you buy?
- Will hearing aids allow you to hear as you once did?

Where Do You Begin?

The Food and Drug Administration has determined that your best health interest would be served if you had a medical evaluation by a licensed physician (preferably a physician specializing in diseases of the ear) before purchasing a hearing aid. This will ensure that any medically-treatable conditions that may affect your hearing are identified and treated before a hearing aid is purchased. Once you have determined that your hearing difficulties are not medically or surgically correctable, you should have your hearing tested by a registered hearing aid dispenser. New York State requires that all dispensers of hearing aids be registered with the Department of State and that they display their business and individual dispenser registrations prominently at their place of business.

Selecting a Hearing Aid Dispenser

The term dispenser applies to all who fit and sell hearing aids, whether they are hearing aid specialists, dispensing audiologists, or otolaryngologists. The same level of service should be expected from all.

Selecting a dispenser is extremely important because you are choosing a person with whom you will have a long-term relationship. Because of the crucial importance of hearing in one's everyday life, you will want the relationship to be comfortable, trusting, and mutually beneficial. A good dispenser is more interested in providing good hearing health care than selling an aid.

What You Should Tell the Dispenser

Communication with your hearing aid dispenser should be a two-way street. You should express your needs and wants so that the dispenser can address those needs.

The Hearing Test and Evaluation

The dispenser will conduct a series of tests to determine the type and extent of your hearing loss. These tests are painless and assess your ability to hear tones, as well as to understand speech. The dispenser records your test results on an "audiogram" and should explain the results of the testing. New York State law requires that you receive a copy of your audiogram, whether or not you purchase a hearing aid.

Binaural Hearing (using both ears)

If you have a loss in both ears, you should consider a binaural fitting (two hearing aids). The advantages to wearing two aids may include improved listening in noisy environments, improved speech understanding and the ability to determine both distance and direction of sounds.

Hearing Aid Selection

Your individual hearing loss and needs must be considered in selecting the right aids and options for you. Be willing

to consider all styles of hearing aids, as there may be specific reasons for certain types to be recommended for your needs. Also be aware that there is no "best" hearing aid for everyone. The dispenser will discuss the various styles of hearing aids and the hearing technologies that should work best for you, including the advantages of a telecoil.

Keep Your Expectations Realistic

Hearing aids will not correct hearing like glasses correct vision, nor will hearing aids restore normal hearing. The secret to success is having realistic expectations. You should know that hearing aids won't allow you to hear as you once did, and that it is difficult for hearing aids to provide optimal hearing in background noise. That is why they are called aids and not cures.

The Sales Contract

As a New York State consumer, you have legal rights when purchasing a hearing aid. Be sure to get a purchase agreement or sales contract containing all the terms of the transaction in writing. Read it carefully. It should include the following items: the state registration numbers of both the hearing aid dispenser and the dispensing office; office location, telephone number and hours of operation; date of purchase; manufacturer, model and serial number; and total price, payment terms, refund provisions, adjustment services, and warranty information.

Satisfaction Guarantee

New York State requires that dispensers grant a 45-day satisfaction guarantee. Purchasers of hearing aids in New York State have the right to cancel the purchase for any reason at any time prior to midnight of the 45th calendar day after receipt of the hearing aid and return the hearing aid in the same condition (ordinary wear and tear excluded by law). The dispenser is allowed to retain an amount up to ten percent of the total price of the canceled hearing aid, including all fitting fees, batteries and accessories.