



## **Differences between Over-The-Counter (OTC) and Prescriptive Hearing Devices**

Over-the-counter (OTC) hearing devices are now available to the public. As of October 2022, consumers can purchase over-the-counter hearing devices online, in pharmacies, big-box stores, and even through audiologists. Using over-the-counter devices may be a starting point for adults with perceived mild to moderate hearing loss. As the licensure board, it is our mission to protect the consumers of Louisiana, so we want to ensure that they receive necessary information to assist in making an informed decision when beginning their hearing healthcare journey.

We have adapted the following chart, originally created by our colleagues at the Louisiana Academy of Audiology (LAA). Please feel free to share.

	Over-the-Counter (OTC) Hearing Devices	Prescriptive Hearing Aids (Dispensed by a licensed hearing healthcare professional)
PRICE	Wide Range	Average \$2000-\$8000. May be eligible for some insurance coverage or state funded plans.
AGE	18 years+	Any Age
HEARING RANGE	Mild to Moderate Hearing Loss	All degrees of hearing loss.
HEARING HEALTH	No medical evaluation or diagnosis to rule out medically treatable hearing disorders.	Continued medical management for evaluation and treatment of hearing loss following otolaryngological referral for medically treatable hearing disorders.
EVALUATION	Patients fit themselves with devices. Can be done with pre-set programs/ smartphone app guided self-programming.	Comprehensive audiological examination. Otoscope examination of ears (wax removal if needed). Appropriate referral made for medical treatment of diseased ear(s) if applicable.
FITTING	Relies on the patient's self-perception of their hearing loss. Some devices provide a self-assessment of hearing through a smartphone application.	Programmed to individual prescriptive hearing thresholds by licensed hearing professionals (Audiologists or hearing aid specialists). Noise reduction technology and tinnitus management available.
CUSTOMIZATION	None	Fit to the unique needs of the patient.
STYLE OPTIONS AND SELECTION	Typically, one-size-fits-most. Some devices provide a small selection of sizes (consumer selects the fit). Most choose devices based on consumer research and reviews.	Hearing healthcare providers will discuss appropriate devices based on individual patient needs. Includes customized, discreet options.
HELP WITH USER TRAINING	None	In-person training on use/care of devices with a licensed professional. Ongoing support with adjustment to new sounds and new technology, including troubleshooting with accessories and smart phone apps.
HELP WITH DEVICE MAINTENANCE	Typically, none. Some packages may provide a contact number for assistance, but this is not required by the FDA.	On-going cleaning, device checks, and adjustments – some fees may apply.
VERIFICATION OF AMPLIFICATION	None	Real-Ear measurements to confirm individual prescriptive targets are met.
DEVICE LIFESPAN	Unknown	Approximately 5 years.
RETURN POLICY	No requirement proposed by the FDA.	Minimum 30 days. Most clinics range from 30-75 days.



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