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HEARING AID STYLES

There are various hearing aid sizes currently available. Selection of hearing aid size is based upon three important factors:

1. **Severity of hearing loss** - the more severe the hearing loss, the more likely the hearing aid will be larger in order to provide the appropriate amount of amplification for the patient.
2. **Size of the ear/ear canal** - occasionally, a patient may not be a candidate for the smallest size hearing aid (CIC) due to narrowing of the ear canal, in which case a slightly larger (mini ITC or ITC) hearing aid may be a more appropriate option.
3. **Cost** - for some hearing aid manufacturers, the smaller the hearing aid, the greater the cost. Many people think that only small hearing aids are digital. This is not true. Your audiologist can order ANY size hearing aid in both analog and digital technology. Therefore, the "guts" of the hearing aid (the circuitry), whether analog or digital, can be put into any size of hearing aid you choose.

SIZES:



BTE: Behind-the-Ear Behind-the-Ear hearing aids are the largest hearing aids and they are very reliable. BTEs have the most circuit options and they can typically have much more power than any other in-the-ear hearing aids. BTEs are the units that "sit" on the top and back of your ear. They are connected to the ear canal via an ear mold. The ear mold is custom made from an ear impression to perfectly replicate the size and shape of your ear. There is a small piece of tubing that connects the ear mold to the hearing aid. BTE hearing aids are large enough to allow for all the necessary features to be added to the hearing aid (ex: volume control wheel, program/setting button, telephone switch/button). BTE hearing aids can also include a **DIRECTIONAL MICROPHONE**. This is a special microphone that is added to a hearing aid in order to eliminate background noise. The directional microphone can improve a person's speech understanding in noisy environments, such as restaurants, church, parties, etc.



ITE: In-the-Ear In-the-Ear hearing aids are probably the most comfortable, the least expensive, and the easiest to operate. They are also the largest of all the custom made styles that go completely in your ear. They can include a volume control wheel, program button (to change settings, optional), telephone switch (optional), and directional microphone (to improve hearing in background noise). Battery life with an ITE hearing aid is a few days longer than with all other hearing aids that are smaller.



ITC: In-the-Canal In-the-Canal units are a little more expensive than ITEs, and they are smaller. The ITC aid requires good dexterity to control the volume wheel and any other controls on the faceplate. Depending on the size of a person's ear, very few controls will fit onto an ITC hearing aid. Usually a volume control wheel and program button is the only feature that will fit onto the ITC. Very few ITC hearing aids are large enough to include a directional microphone or telephone switch. After taking an ear mold impression to get the shape of your ear, your audiologist should be able to tell you how many controls will fit onto your ITC hearing aid.

MC: Mini-Canal Mini-Canal aids are a size between ITC and CIC. A mini-canal hearing aid is a good choice when you desire the smallest possible hearing aid while still including a volume control wheel. Depending on the size of a person's ear, very few controls will fit onto an ITC hearing aid. Usually a volume control is the only feature that will fit onto the ITC. Very few ITC hearing aids are large enough to also include a directional microphone, telephone switch, or program button. After taking an ear mold impression to get the shape of your ear, your audiologist should be able to tell you how many controls will fit onto your ITC hearing aid.



CIC: Completely-In-the-Canal Completely-In-the-Canal hearing aids are the smallest hearing aids made. Since CIC aids go far down into the ear canal, they usually require a "removal wire" to be attached to the hearing aid to help you pull it out of the ear canal. CIC hearing aids can be difficult to remove without a removal wire. CIC hearing aids are too small to include any manual controls (ex: volume control, program buttons, telephone switch) because there is not enough room on the faceplate of the hearing aid. Also, CIC aids are too small to include a directional microphone (to reduce background noise). Therefore, most CIC hearing aid users have a harder time listening and understanding speech in noisy environments, because they do not have a directional microphone to help reduce any background noise.