

# **Decision Tool: Options in the Hearing Clinic**

*Use this guide to help you decide  
what you want to do about your  
hearing problems*

# My Hearing Treatment Options

[illegible]

# Hearing Aids

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being professionally fitted with hearing aids.</li><li>• Wearing the hearing aids to help with my hearing problems.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attending a minimum of 3 clinic sessions for fitting and adjusting hearing aids and for advice about how to get the most help from them in my daily life.</li><li>• Buying the hearing aids.</li><li>• Paying for the professional services.</li><li>• Performing routine care and maintenance of the hearing aids.</li><li>• Returning to the clinic for hearing aid adjustments when I need to.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I will be able to hear soft sounds better.</li><li>• My hearing will be improved for conversation in a quiet place with one person or a small group, and when I watch television or talk on the telephone.</li><li>• I can expect some improvement in my ability to hear in some noisy places.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hearing aids may not sound natural when I am in noise or in a large group.</li><li>• I will need to practice and persevere for weeks or months to get used to hearing aids and to get the most help from them.</li><li>• The hearing aids might be somewhat visible to others.</li></ul>

# Hearing Management Group

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participating in group sessions with other people who have hearing problems and some of their family members.</li><li>• Learning ways to cope with hearing problems.</li><li>• Using this information in my daily life.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attending group sessions held at the Memphis Speech &amp; Hearing Center.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can use the information about how to manage my hearing problems so that they will not be so much trouble.</li><li>• I will meet and talk with others who have similar problems.</li><li>• A family member can attend with me and learn about what it means to have hearing problems.</li><li>• If I decide to use a hearing device, the skills I learn will be a valuable supplement.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I need motivation to go to the sessions instead of staying home or doing something else.</li><li>• I need to enjoy interacting with other people and getting to know them.</li><li>• I might not like some of the other people in the group.</li></ul>

# Hearing Skills Training

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using a DVD-based or online training program to practice listening skills.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Purchase or rent the DVD or online program to use at home.</li><li>• Complete one thirty-minute lesson per week for 10 weeks.</li><li>• Use my own DVD player and TV at home or my computer to play the lessons.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can improve my ability to understand speech in some noisy places.</li><li>• My family can watch the lessons and learn about the problems of having a hearing loss.</li><li>• I will not have to leave home.</li><li>• If I decide to use a hearing device, the skills I learn will be a valuable supplement.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I need motivation to do the lessons.</li><li>• It might be inconvenient to find a time when I can use the DVD player or computer at home.</li><li>• It takes time to build up my skills using the lessons.</li></ul>

# Hearing Assistive Technology

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using one or more specialized pieces of equipment to help me hear better in particular situations at home, in the car, or when I am out.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look at the assistive listening devices in the clinic.</li><li>• Try out some that seem interesting to me.</li><li>• Purchase one or more devices.</li><li>• Use the device(s) in daily life to help me hear better.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No long clinic appointments.</li><li>• Less costly than hearing aids.</li><li>• Easy to learn to use.</li><li>• I can get help when and where I want it.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It might not be convenient to use several different devices.</li><li>• I still will have hearing problems in situations where my devices are not used.</li></ul>

# Cochlear Implants

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having a “candidacy evaluation” to see if a cochlear implant might help me.</li><li>• Undergoing surgery and professional fitting appointments.</li><li>• Wearing a cochlear implant to help with my hearing problems.</li><li>• Participating in listening training to learn how to hear with the device.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attending several appointments to see if I qualify for a cochlear implant (includes testing my speech understanding while wearing a hearing aid).</li><li>• Having surgery and waiting until my cochlear implant is activated.</li><li>• Attending several clinic sessions for fitting and adjusting the cochlear implant and for advice and training about how to get the most help from them in my daily life.</li><li>• Paying for the implant, the surgery, and the professional services.</li><li>• Performing routine care and maintenance of the cochlear implant.</li><li>• Returning to the clinic for cochlear implant adjustments when I need to.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I will be able to hear sounds better.</li><li>• My hearing will be improved for conversation in a quiet place with one person or a small group and when I watch television or talk on the telephone.</li><li>• I can expect some improvements in my ability to hear in some noisy places.</li><li>• Most cochlear implants come with accessories, such as remote microphones to help me hear better in noise.</li><li>• Most insurance companies pay for costs associated with cochlear implants.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I have to have surgery to get the cochlear implant</li><li>• Speech and music through the cochlear implant will not sound how I remember.</li><li>• I will need to practice and persevere for months to get used to the cochlear implant and to get the most help from it.</li><li>• The amount of help I will get cannot be predicted in advance.</li><li>• A cochlear implant will be visible to others.</li></ul>

# Bone Conduction Hearing Aid (e.g. BAHA)

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having a “candidacy evaluation” to see if a bone conduction hearing aid (a hearing aid that connects in some way to the skull bone) might help me.</li><li>• Choosing what type of bone conduction hearing aid to obtain.</li><li>• Undergoing surgery and professional fitting appointments.</li><li>• Wearing a BAHA to help with my hearing problems.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attending several appointments to see if I qualify for a BAHA.</li><li>• Having surgery and waiting for the surgery incision to heal before my BAHA is activated.</li><li>• Attending several clinic sessions for fitting and adjusting the BAHA and for advice about how to get the most help from them in my daily life.</li><li>• Paying for the implant, the surgery, and the professional services.</li><li>• Performing routine care and maintenance of the BAHA.</li><li>• Returning to the clinic for adjustments to the device when I need to.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If I am a candidate for a BAHA, I will be able to hear some sounds more clearly and naturally than with typical hearing aids.</li><li>• The benefits of this device can be shown in the clinic with a demonstration device, so you can have a good idea what to expect before you have surgery.</li><li>• Procedures do not damage the hearing that you have.</li><li>• Many insurance companies pay for the surgery, and some pay for the BAHA processor.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I have to have surgery to get the BAHA.</li><li>• I will need to practice to get used to using the BAHA and to get the most help from it.</li><li>• I will have to follow-up with an Ear, Nose, and Throat physician on a regular basis to monitor the attachment site.</li><li>• A BAHA will be visible to others.</li></ul>



# Over-the-Counter (OTC) Hearing Aids with professional follow up

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choosing hearing aids from available over-the-counter options on my own.</li><li>• Wearing the hearing aids to help with my hearing problems.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attending a minimum of 3 clinic sessions for fitting hearing aids and for advice about how to get the most help from them in my daily life.</li><li>• Buying the hearing aids.</li><li>• Paying for the professional services.</li><li>• Performing routine care and maintenance of the hearing aids.</li><li>• Returning to the clinic for hearing aid adjustments when I need to.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I will be able to hear soft sounds better.</li><li>• My hearing may improve for conversation in a quiet place with one person or a small group, and when I watch television.</li><li>• OTC products are less expensive than traditional hearing aids.</li><li>• If I try these hearing aids and they do not work well for me, I can pursue other products.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Like all hearing aids, OTC aids might not sound natural in noise or large groups.</li><li>• OTC aids are programmed to one-size-fits-all settings. They cannot be adjusted by the audiologist to accommodate my specific hearing.</li><li>• I will have limited choices about the styles and features available.</li><li>• Fewer accessories are available to help with more difficult listening environments.</li><li>• There is no trial period for this type of hearing aid.</li><li>• The hearing aids might be somewhat visible to others.</li></ul>

# Over-the-Counter (OTC) Hearing Aids without professional follow up

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choosing hearing aids from available over-the-counter options on my own.</li><li>• Wearing the hearing aids to help with my hearing problems.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buying the hearing aids.</li><li>• Learning to use the hearing aids on my own, including making adjustments and troubleshooting.</li><li>• Performing routine care and maintenance of the hearing aids.</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I will be able to hear soft sounds better.</li><li>• My hearing may improve for conversation in a quiet place with one person or a small group, and when I watch television.</li><li>• OTC products are less expensive than traditional hearing aids.</li><li>• I will not need to visit the hearing clinic or pay for services.</li><li>• If I try these hearing aids and they do not work well for me, I can pursue other products.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Like all hearing aids, OTC aids will not sound natural in noise or large groups.</li><li>• I will have limited choices about the styles and features available.</li><li>• OTC aids are programmed to one-size-fits-all settings. They cannot be adjusted by the audiologist to accommodate my specific hearing.</li><li>• Fewer accessories are available to help with more difficult listening environments.</li><li>• I have to learn to use them on my own or pay additional costs for help from an audiologist.</li><li>• There is no trial period for this type of hearing aid.</li><li>• The hearing aids might be somewhat visible to others.</li></ul>

# No Treatment

What is involved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue my daily life without making any changes.</li></ul>
What is expected from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nothing</li></ul>
What are the positives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is no effort or cost to me.</li></ul>
What are the negatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My hearing problems will remain.</li><li>• Problems that occur in my daily life due to hearing difficulties may cause me to feel frustrated, embarrassed or lonely.</li><li>• My hearing problems may cause difficulties for my family and others.</li></ul>

General guidelines for use (not part of the printed decision tool).

Introduce the decision tool with patients after having taken their history, done the audiogram, filled various disability/attitudes questionnaires with them, and discussed goals with the COSI. All of this makes it easier to "personalize" how you use the decision tool with each patient. It should be used in a "shared decision making" context, where you ask the patient for their opinion AND you also guide the patient according to the information you have already gathered.

As all experienced audiologists know, it's about striking the right balance between 1) giving too firm recommendations that are disconnected from patients and 2) throwing the patients in the deep end and telling them it's their choice and we can't make that choice for them. Hopefully, the decision tool helps in striking this balance.

Page 2. Be ready to answer the question: "Do I have to pick only one of the options?"

After presenting the columns (the options) on page 2, ask patients to check which ones they want to know more about, i.e. for which ones you should go through the following pages. This helps focus the discussion.

Afterwards, ask patients to check which options they would like to think about in the "deliberation period". This helps focus their thinking. They take a copy of the decision tool home and you encourage them to show it to people around them and discuss the options. You call them about 1 week later to check what they have decided to do.