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## How to fix hearing aid feedback

Photo Courtesy: Jovanmandic/iStock People with hearing loss may soon have a much easier time buying hearing aids, as a new federal rule paves the way for less expensive devices that are available over the counter (OTC). In October 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced a landmark rule change that will allow Americans to buy some types of hearing aids in stores and online without a prescription. We're taking a look at what inspired the change and how it can help people living with hearing loss.

Who Needs Hearing Aids? Photo Courtesy: Rawpixel/iStock About 15 percent of American adults say they have trouble hearing — that's nearly 40 million people. Hearing aids can make a big difference in the daily lives of people with hearing loss, yet only one out of five people who need hearing aids actually has them.

One main barrier to getting hearing aids is that they don't come cheap. Currently, you can expect to pay around \$1000 to \$6000 for each device (and most people need two). And most insurance plans don't cover the cost of hearing aids. By opening up the market to OTC versions from a wider range of manufacturers, the new rule can drive down costs and make these devices more accessible. The prescription requirement can also be a barrier to access. Getting prescription hearing aids can mean several visits to a hearing specialist — and that means arranging transportation on top of any costs for the visits. OTC devices would make the process quicker and more convenient for many consumers.

What Does the New FDA Rule Change Mean? Photo Courtesy: JHVEPhoto/iStock Once the rule is finalized, you'll be able to buy hearing aids directly from a store or online retailer, fit them yourself and possibly even self-adjust their settings in ways current hearing aids don't allow. But this won't be an unregulated free-for-all. The FDA will still regulate OTC hearing aids to ensure that they're safe and effective for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss. Companies will also have to include warnings and information about when to see your doctor for prescription hearing aids rather than going the OTC route. By making it easier for companies to get into the hearing aid market, the rule may encourage innovation and lead to better, cheaper products for people with hearing loss. "Soon, millions of people with mild to moderate hearing loss will finally have lower-cost hearing aid options — and more options mean more competition in the market, further driving down the cost for consumers," Senators Elizabeth Warren and Chuck Grassley said in a statement to NPR. "This is terrific news."

What Kind of Hearing Aids Will Be OTC? Will I Still Need a Prescription? Photo Courtesy: Vladimir Vladimirov/iStock The question of whether or not you'll still need a prescription to buy hearing aids depends on the severity of your hearing loss. OTC hearing aids will be geared towards those with mild to moderate hearing loss, while people with more severe hearing problems will still need a prescription for their devices. Think of it like eyeglasses. You can buy basic reading glasses at the drugstore, but you still need a prescription from your eye doctor to get glasses for more severe vision problems.

How Much Will OTC Hearing Aids Cost? Photo Courtesy: Johnrob/iStock Although plans for OTC hearing aids are still in the early days, some experts have high hopes that hearing aid prices will soon hit a new low. "These over-the-counter devices should cost \$200 to \$800. And they'll be produced by companies like Bose, Samsung and maybe Apple," Dr. Justin Golub, an ear specialist at Columbia University Medical Center, told CBS News. "These are the really innovative companies that always compete to drive costs down."

As popular tech companies get in on the hearing aid market, the devices may become not only cheaper but sleeker as well. And improving the design of these wearable devices may help companies appeal to younger people with hearing loss.

When Will Hearing Aids Be Sold Over the Counter? Photo Courtesy: miodrag ignjatovic/iStock While the FDA proposal is a huge step towards making OTC hearing aids available, it's not clear exactly when you'll start seeing them on shelves. First, the proposal goes through a 60-day public comment period. Then the FDA has 180 days to publish the final regulations. Based on this timing, experts are hopeful that we may start seeing OTC hearing aids sometime in 2022. "The agency is committed to timely implementation of this provision and to ensuring the proper guardrails are in place to make over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids a safe and effective option for consumers," an FDA spokesperson commented to Forbes Health.

So stay tuned for more news on OTC hearing aids. With any luck, these life-changing devices will soon be much more accessible for everyone who needs them.

MORE FROM SYMPTOMFIND.COM Hearing aids whistle sometimes, just like your phone sometimes does when it's too close to the radio. If you wear hearing aids, you're going to experience whistling at some point. It can happen through something as simple as putting on a scarf. The whistling is called hearing aid feedback. Here's what causes it and what you can do about it. How does hearing aid feedback occur? Hearing aid feedback occurs when sound that was supposed to go into your ear canal leaves your ear and jumps back into the hearing aid microphone. The sound then gets reamplified, and this causes your hearing aids to whistle. This feedback can happen in different contexts, like when you put your hearing aids on in the morning and take them off in the evening, or when someone hugs you. This is perfectly normal because the hearing aids are reacting to the sound bouncing back from your surroundings. Hearing aid feedback could also be a sign that something could be wrong with your hearing aids, or they need to be cleaned. In that case it's best to consult your hearing care professional. If you're a hearing aids user, maintaining their performance is vital as you look to enjoy greater clarity on a long-term basis. Feedback (that unwanted screeching or whistling sound) is one of the most common issues reported to audiologists. Finding ways to stop those issues will aid daily activities, prevent headaches, and decelerate future damage. Here are four methods that can prevent feedback to ensure that your hearing (and devices) in great health. Reinsert Perhaps the most obvious reason for potential feedback is that the hearing aid isn't correctly inserted. This issue may leave you feeling a little silly, but you'd be amazed at how regularly this problem occurs. Any audiologist will confirm this. If the whistling has appeared suddenly, there's a very good chance that taking the device out and reinserting it will solve the problem. Try pulling the earlobe down while inserting the device as this will ensure it sits properly in the ear canal. On a separate note, adjusting the volume of the hearing aid may provide the solution to those feedback problems. Remove earwax Problems with feedback aren't always rooted in faults with the hearing aids. Inserting a device into your ear canal can naturally see it come into contact with earwax, and this can cause a few issues. Earwax is a naturally occurring part of human life, and it actually has a huge role to play in protecting the ears. Nonetheless, a big buildup of earwax can cause blockages to the canal. In turn, this can impact the amplification provided by the hearing aids, resulting in buzzing. This whistling due to wax is something that also impacts non-wearers. There are several ways to clear earwax, including irrigation with a syringe. However, this can be dangerous if there is a burst eardrum. Getting checked by an expert is key. Refit Loose-fitting hearing aids allow the noise to escape the ear canal. In turn, this can result in feedback as well as reduced hearing. Therefore, this is another issue to consider. There are several ways to check whether this is the source of your problems. Rubbing a small amount of petroleum jelly on the device can serve as a barrier between the gaps. Meanwhile, pushing the device a little deeper (but not too far) into the canal can plug those gaps. If you notice that feedback has stopped after these steps, a loose fit is the likely issue. It may be necessary for the device to be re-cased or re-shaped by an expert. Repair Hearing aids are quite delicate items. Even if your audiologist has provided you with a robust product, there's no doubt that it could succumb to wear and tear. Feedback is one of the most common signs that there is a fault with at least one part of the device. It may be tempting to repair visible damages such as bent or misshaped elements yourself. Unfortunately, your untrained eye is unlikely to restore the hearing aid to its very best. Even if you do minimize the problem, it's still there. Worse still, the deterioration will soon resume. A professional repair job now will save you a lot of time and money in the long run. For the sake of your hearing and pocket alike, speaking to an audiologist is advised.





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