



DeafHear.ie

Services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing People

See our leaflet for our Resource Centres
and Outreach Centres

*Check out our range of leaflets or visit our website at
www.deafhear.ie for further information*



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■ Visiting an Audiologist

What to expect when you have a consultation
with an audiologist...



Visiting an Audiologist

Notes

This information leaflet is aimed at people who feel that they may need to get a full hearing test and it describes what happens when they visit an audiologist.

Who is an 'audiologist' and what do they do?

An audiologist is a health care professional who is trained to evaluate hearing loss and related disorders, including balance (vestibular) disorders and tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and to rehabilitate individuals with hearing loss and related disorders.

An audiologist uses a variety of tests and procedures to assess hearing and balance function and they may also fit and dispense hearing aids and other assistive devices for hearing.

If I have a hearing problem, how can an audiologist help me?

An audiologist can evaluate your hearing, determine whether you have a hearing loss, and make recommendations for hearing health care. This may include a referral to an ENT consultant or recommendations for hearing aids or other amplifying devices or methods to modify the listening environment.

How do I obtain a consultation with an audiologist?

This will depend on whether you have a medical card and are entitled to a free hearing test or whether you have to go privately.

If you have a medical card, then you contact your GP who will refer you to the 'Hearing Service' for a hearing test, or he might refer you to an ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) consultant at your main hospital.

If on the other hand, you do not have a medical card, or you specifically want to 'go private', then you can ask your GP or a friend to recommend someone, or obtain a list of qualified clinical audiologists/hearing aid audiologists from your local Health Centre or DeafHear office.

For more information see the following leaflet: "***What you need to know when buying a hearing aid...***"

So I have made an appointment and have now arrived at the audiologist...what happens next?

When you visit an audiologist, there are four main areas of investigation that will be checked during the consultation, and they are:

- Case History
- Otoscopy
- Tympanometry
- Audiometry

Firstly, the audiologist will start the consultation by taking a case history. As well as confirming your personal details, the audiologist asks questions about your hearing, use of hearing aids, noise exposure, communication issues and medically related issues such as tinnitus, dizziness and previous ear surgeries if applicable. A detailed case history helps the audiologist understand your concerns and make appropriate medical referrals as necessary.

The audiologist will then carry out otoscopy which involves having a look down your ear canal with a special magnifying pen light called an 'otoscope'. This is to check for things like wax, blockages or any problems with your ear canal/eardrum which need to be taken into account before proceeding onto other tests.

Now comes the testing! There are two different types of tests carried out at this stage. Usually the audiologist will begin with tympanometry first, although this is not always the case.

Tympanometry is a test of middle ear function. During this test a small probe is inserted in the ear and you will feel a slight pressure change. You may also hear a series of loud beeps. This test measures how well the eardrum moves in response to slight pressure. It is a very sensitive test in detecting anything that would inhibit the motion of the eardrum such as fluid, infection, or eustachian tube dysfunction.

Finally, but by no means least, audiometry is carried out.

A comprehensive audiometric evaluation consists of two essential tests. For these tests you will be seated in a soundproof booth or room and instructed to indicate, by pushing a button or by raising your hand, when you hear a sound or a soft tone in your ears. First, the audiologist determines the softest sound that a patient can hear under earphones at several different pitches. This is called testing via air conduction. Then a bone vibrator is placed behind the patient's ear to determine the softest level that the patient can hear when stimulating the inner ear directly and bypassing the outer and middle ear. This is called testing via bone conduction.

Information obtained from these two tests help to determine the type of hearing loss. This may include conductive (i.e., hearing loss in the outer and/or middle ear), sensorineural (i.e., hearing loss in the inner ear) or mixed (conductive and sensorineural). The information from these two tests also allows the audiologist to determine the magnitude of the hearing loss.

The threshold at each pitch for each ear will be recorded on a pure tone audiogram. You may also complete other tasks as part of the evaluation, including repeating words to obtain a speech discrimination score (your speech understanding at a comfortable listening level).

Immediately following the tests, the audiologist will explain the results. The appropriate referrals and/or recommendations are made. It might be suggested that your hearing be tested on a regular basis to monitor any changes. It might be that a visit to an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist (Otolaryngologist) is necessary to investigate the need for medical intervention. Or it might be that hearing aids and/or other assistive listening devices are the possible solutions.

After the visit has concluded and if necessary/applicable the audiologist will send a copy of their report back to your GP or/and referral source.

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