

## **What is an audiologist?**

An audiologist is a professional who evaluates, diagnoses, treats, and manages hearing loss and balance disorders. The majority of hearing loss cannot be treated with medicines or surgery but can be treated by an audiologist with the use of hearing (re)habilitation (counseling, education, auditory training/exercises), hearing aids and/or assistive listening devices (products to use to enhance television viewing, phone amplifiers, etc.). Audiologists make medical referrals to a physician when appropriate (e.g., ear pain, drainage from the ear, sudden hearing loss, etc.).

Audiologists receive extensive education in hearing and balance disorders. Most audiologists have earned masters and/or doctoral degrees and you may see the initials Au.D., (Doctor of Audiology – clinical degree); Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy – research and/or clinical research degree); or Sc.D. (Doctor of science – usually a clinical degree) to designate advanced training.

Audiologists specialize in a multitude of work environments such as members of cochlear implant teams, managing hearing conservation programs, evaluating for and prescribing hearing aids and other hearing assistive devices, and perform hearing-related surgical monitoring. In addition, audiologists also screen the hearing of newborns, teach listening skills and strategies, assess individuals with central auditory processing disorders, and assess and treat individuals who suffer with tinnitus (ear noises). Audiologists work in clinical settings such as a hospital, private practice or other medical facility; many are professors at universities and colleges; there are researchers and some who work within the hearing and balance manufacturing industries.

## **Why do I need an audiologist for a successful hearing aid fitting?**

Hearing aids are medical devices regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and must be recommended and prescribed by licensed professionals. This standard is in place to protect the individual with hearing loss as not all individuals are candidates for amplification. Additionally, an improperly fit hearing aid or hearing aid sold online without a face-to-face evaluation with an audiologist can potentially cause various problems. Without a face-to-face evaluation, the consumer will not have an otoscopic evaluation (have the audiologist look into the ear canal) and medical problems such as ear drainage or ear blockages which can cause hearing loss will not be identified. Additionally, hearing aids that are not adjusted to the individual needs of the patient have the potential for increasing the hearing loss if the devices are not set appropriately. Lastly, audiologists can tailor a comprehensive treatment plan for each individual patient so as to ensure maximum performance from any device that may be prescribed.



