

Hearing Associates  
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## Hear in the Now Announcements

### Fall in Love with Your Hearing

Valentine's Day is on its way! Why not make your hearing your valentine this year and show your ears some love?

Schedule your appointment at any Hearing Associates office in northern Iowa or southern Minnesota for a comprehensive hearing screening. We can also help your ears find "the one," or two, perfect hearing aids to suit your hearing loss needs.



### Do Good for Your Ears and Your Community

Hearing Associates is participating in a very special community project through the end of March. Schedule and complete a hearing screening at any of our locations, and we'll donate \$20 on your behalf to the Albert Lea Healthcare Coalition. The goal of the coalition is to provide local access to high-quality affordable healthcare by community involvement.

Spread the word and encourage family and friends to schedule a visit at Hearing Associates as well! Help us help our beloved community by simply making your appointment today!



### Our Albert Lea Office is Ready for Patients!

The renovations at our Albert Lea, Minnesota office are complete. Please stop by and check out our amazing new space. We hope you'll love it as much as we do!



## Hear in the Now News

Winter 2022

Providing excellent customer service & quality hearing aids to our patients since 1987. Hearing Associates, P.C. is your hearing healthcare expert in Mason City, Northern Iowa, and Albert Lea, Minnesota.



# Improve Your Hearing Health This Year

Are you considering making a New Year's resolution but aren't sure what to change? Consider focusing on better hearing health.

Good hearing positively impacts all aspects of your life, from personal relationships to your earning power at work. Here are a few steps to boost your hearing and prevent future damage.

## Protect Your Hearing

**Assess your soundscape:** The first step in protecting your hearing is identifying the sources of loud sounds. Those may include music, construction zones, workplace noise, or hobbies like hunting and woodworking.

### Reduce noise exposure:

- Turn down the volume on your TV, radio and headphones.
- Move away from noisy equipment or machinery.
- Shut your office door to muffle ambient noise.
- Distance yourself from speakers at live performances.

**Wear hearing protection:** Custom hearing protection and disposable foam earplugs can go a long way toward preventing hearing loss.

## Make Lifestyle Changes

**Eliminate nicotine:** Smoking lowers your oxygen levels and negatively impacts the blood vessels in your ears. The hair cells in your inner ear can sustain permanent damage without sufficient blood flow. Cutting out

smoking will give your blood vessels the chance to recover and support your hearing.

**Eat a heart – and hearing – healthy diet:** There's a direct connection between your cardiovascular and auditory systems. A poor diet affects your cardiovascular health, impeding blood flow to your ears. Limiting sodium and saturated fat in your diet will keep your heart healthy.

**Get moving:** Exercise boosts your overall health and lowers your risk for chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease that affect your hearing. Cardio exercises improve circulation and blood oxygen levels and keep your ears healthy.

## Treat Your Hearing Loss

**Schedule a hearing evaluation:** A hearing test will determine your type and degree of hearing loss. They're painless, non-invasive and completed in a single appointment.

**Test hearing aids:** The right pair of hearing aids will not only amplify and clarify sounds before they reach your ears. Wearing hearing aids also supports brain activity, reducing your risk for cognitive decline.

**Attend aural rehabilitation:** This approach involves different therapies to improve your hearing aid experience. Attending aural rehabilitation gives you a chance to ask questions, practice effective communication techniques and network with people who share similar hearing struggles.



# Four Reasons to Wear Your Hearing Aids Daily

If you decide to pursue better hearing in the new year, it's important not to make the mistake of only wearing your hearing aids in noisy listening environments.

Not wearing your hearing aids at home deprives your brain of the stimulation it needs to relearn the sounds you've been missing. That's why it's essential to wear your hearing aids every day.

## Hearing Aids Activate Your Brain

Your ears collect sounds and funnel them to your auditory nerve, and your brain does the "hearing." You may feel overwhelmed by background noises like the refrigerator humming or the clock ticking if you have new hearing devices.

That apparent barrage of sounds is caused by auditory deprivation, which occurs when the auditory cortex of your brain isn't exposed to sounds due to hearing loss. Wearing hearing aids regularly reduces the effect of auditory deprivation.

## Hearing Aid Use Lowers Your Risk for Dementia

A study conducted at Johns Hopkins found even people with mild hearing loss were more likely to develop dementia than people with normal hearing.

Auditory stimulation keeps your brain cognitively strong, and regularly wearing your hearing devices is a good way to get a mental workout. Promoting brain activity decreases your risk for cognitive decline, memory loss and dementia, which have been linked to hearing loss.

## Your Hearing Aids Keep You Safe

Your hearing aids provide you with insight into your surroundings by picking up environmental sounds and alerts.

Here are some important sounds you may miss that could affect your safety:

- Phone calls, text messages and emergency notifications
- Fire alarms and smoke detectors
- Police, ambulance and firetruck sirens
- Car horns
- Verbal warnings

## You Can Connect to Wireless Technology

One of the unique features of modern hearing aids is connecting to technology like smartphones, computers, tablets and TVs. That connectivity provides you with a quality listening experience without adjusting your devices. Modern hearing aids help you stay in touch with the world, even if you don't leave your home.

With Bluetooth hearing aids, you can:

- Make and answer calls
- Listen to music and podcasts
- Attend remote video meetings
- Stream audio from your favorite shows and movies
- Catch up on news

# How Hearing Loops Improve Your Listening Experience

Telecoils and hearing loops can provide a better listening experience by reducing background noise and improving sound quality.

And Hearing Associates offers aural rehabilitation classes to help you optimize your telecoil hearing aid performance.

## What Are Hearing Loops?

A hearing loop system is a type of assistive listening technology.

Here's how they work:

1. A wire loop is connected to a sound system that distributes sound in a public space.
2. The sound system's amplifier sends a current through the wire loop, generating a magnetic signal.
3. Compatible hearing aids and cochlear implants convert the magnetic signal into audio with a telecoil feature.
4. The hearing aid converts the audio signal into sound for your ear.

A hearing loop eliminates background noise by delivering sounds directly to your hearing aids. That means you can listen to public speakers, movies, live performances and airport announcements without ambient noise.

## How do Telecoils Work?

A telecoil is a small copper coil available for many hearing aid styles. It functions as a wireless antenna by linking your devices to the sound source and delivering audio directly to your ears. Some cell phones and all landline phones also use telecoils.

Telecoils must be programmed into your hearing aid or cochlear implant and switched to the "T," telecoil or hearing loop setting.

If your hearing aid doesn't have a telecoil, you'll need a headset that connects to the hearing loop receiver. You can also purchase a separate accessory for your hearing aids to access the telecoil.

## How Aural Rehab Can Help

You may need assistance while you're getting acquainted with your new telecoil hearing aids. Aural rehabilitation classes provide the education you need to wear your hearing aids effectively and comfortably.

Hearing Associates offers Your Hearing Journey classes to help build a support network of people sharing similar experiences. We will teach you to use and maintain your devices, switch on telecoil features and interact with hearing loops.

## Hearing Loops Near You

Several locations provide hearing loops near Mason City, Iowa and Albert Lea, Minnesota.

1. Hearing Associates in Mason City, Iowa.
2. First Lutheran Church in Northwood, Iowa
3. Wesley United Methodist Church in Mason City, Iowa
4. Garner United Methodist Church in Garner, Iowa
5. Northwood Movie Theater in Northwood, Iowa
6. Albert Lea Community Theater in Albert Lea, Minnesota

# You May Be Missing Out with OTC Hearing Aids



Hearing aids can be a costly investment, which is why over-the-counter hearing aids appeal to some people.

"I hope OTC hearing devices will make hearing help available to more people," said Stuart Trembath, owner and audiologist at Hearing Associates. "We will be happy to help you get the most out of these basic devices and look forward to helping you improve your hearing."

## FDA Regulations on OTC Hearing Aids

Because they're considered medical devices, over-the-counter hearing aids are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has proposed regulations to differentiate OTC hearing aids from prescription devices acquired through audiologists, hearing aid specialists and otolaryngologists.

That distinction allows consumers to buy OTC devices directly from stores or online without a hearing exam or fitting from a hearing health professional.

Federal regulations mandate that OTC devices are safe for people with mild to moderate hearing loss. The FDA requires those devices to include warnings that recommend you consult your primary physician or a healthcare professional before purchasing them.

## Are there Advantages?

Over-the-counter hearing aids are available in some drug stores. They increase the volume of ambient sounds, so they're similar to personal amplification devices.

These hearing devices also cost less than prescription hearing aids, and you don't need to visit a healthcare professional to buy them. You can also adjust other setting options if the device has any.

## The Problem with OTC Hearing Devices

When you purchase over-the-counter hearing aids, your devices aren't likely to include the latest innovations in hearing technology. OTC devices only amplify sound and can't cancel background noises or adjust to new listening environments automatically.

Audiologists have extensive experience evaluating hearing loss, so they can prescribe hearing aids that suit your exact needs. They'll schedule follow-up appointments to adjust your devices and ensure they fit comfortably.

Other advantages of purchasing your hearing aids from an audiologist include:

- Hearing evaluations to identify the cause of your hearing loss
- A variety of hearing aids in different sizes, styles and colors
- Technological advances, including directional mics and custom settings
- Bluetooth capabilities to connect to smartphones, computers, tablets and TVs