

How to know if you need an over-the-counter hearing aid, or a doctor

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Not all hearing loss is equal. Audiologists and hearing experts offered up tips on how to know if over-the-counter aids are right for you, and when hearing symptoms should entail a doctor visit.

"It's only for [adults](#) with perceived mild to moderate hearing loss," said Barbara Kelley, president of the Hearing Loss Association of America.

That means people over age 18 who find that speech or other sounds seem muffled; have trouble hearing in a group, in a noisy area, on the phone or when you can't see the speaker; asking for repeats or for someone to speak louder, and if you have to blast the television, radio or music volume, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

You might have more [profound hearing loss](#) and need to consult a professional after all if the symptoms are more pronounced, the federal agency said. That includes difficulty hearing conversations in quiet settings, or trouble hearing loud sounds like cars or trucks, noisy appliances or loud music.

"These are signs that you might have more severe hearing loss, and that OTC hearing aids won't work well for you," the institute says on its website.

Hearing loss in tandem with other symptoms warrant a doctor visit, hearing experts said. That includes ear discharge, pain or discomfort; a history of excessive ear wax, or the feeling that something's stuck in your [ear canal](#); vertigo combined with hearing loss; sudden or quickly worsening hearing loss; [hearing loss](#) that has changed in intensity over

the previous six months; ringing in one ear, or a noticeable difference in hearing in each ear.

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