

OVER-THE-COUNTER HEARING AIDS

ACTION

Ensure that any legislation related to over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids is limited to mild hearing loss; contains consumer protections; and ensures that devices are not used for children. Additionally, any legislation related to OTC hearing aids should ensure that current insurance coverage of hearing aids is not undermined. Encourage Congress to take a more holistic approach to access and affordability of hearing aids through meaningful coverage of hearing health care services for individuals with hearing loss.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW?

In 2016, the National Academy of Sciences issued a report titled, “Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability.” One of the 12 recommendations was for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to implement a new category of over-the-counter hearing “devices”.ⁱ While ASHA continues to maintain that the best model of hearing health care features audiologists and consumers collaborating on treatment options, it recognizes instances where that model can be modified.

WHAT YOU NEED TO SAY?

- Hearing health is more than hearing aids. Audiologic intervention is important in proper diagnosis and treatment. Absent audiologic intervention, there is a high probability that individuals will inappropriately self-prescribe and fail to receive appropriate care; thereby, not achieving the sufficient benefit from OTC hearing aids.
- Untreated hearing loss can lead to depression, anxiety, and emotional instability.ⁱⁱ
- OTC hearing aid legislation should be for mild hearing loss only.
- The FDA must ensure consumer protections related to gain and output, as well as provide safeguards that these devices will not be sold to children.
- OTC hearing aids must come with labeling requirements that recommend audiologic intervention for consumers with warning signs for conditions that require medical treatment.

ⁱ *Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability*. National Academy of Science. June 2, 2016. Retrieved from: <http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/reports/2016/Hearing-Health-Care-for-Adults.aspx>.

ⁱⁱ Hearing-impaired adults are at increased risk of experiencing emotional distress and social engagement restrictions five years later. Oxford Academic. May 16, 2012. Retrieved from: <https://academic.oup.com/ageing/article/41/5/618/47025/Hearing-impaired-adults-are-at-increased-risk-of>.

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