

# Why shouldn't I buy hearing aids online?

There are many benefits to shopping online, not least the possibility of saving both time and money. The internet is also a great resource for information, though at times we can be confronted with too much. Today there are many options for purchasing a variety of health-related products online, including medical devices, but how can you know what is right for you unless there has been a proper investigation of your condition, a diagnosis and a prescription from your doctor?

I doubt anyone would buy prescription glasses online without first having had a full eye examination. Likewise, most of us would not even consider buying prescription pharmaceuticals online to treat a self-diagnosed condition. No, we would visit our GP and follow the advice they give.

Like everything else these days, it seems hearing aids too are being offered online at discounted prices. It is therefore, understandable that many consumers are confused by the difference between prices offered by online companies to those charged by reputable hearing healthcare practitioners. Those tempted to buy online could very well find themselves spending money on something totally unsuitable for their needs. In fact, many manufacturers refuse to sell their products to online suppliers and will not honour warranties unless their aids have been fitted by a registered audiologist.

There was a story reported some while ago about a hearing aid, bought on eBay, 'exploding' as the purchaser was about to put it into his ear. Imagine what would have happened if it had exploded in his ear!

**A hearing aid is a complex medical device and as such in the UK can only be sold and fitted by a qualified Hearing Aid Audiologist, who is registered by the Health and Care Professions Council**, the regulatory body that oversees a number of health care professions.

The reason for this is that there are a number of things that could cause hearing loss, some linked to potentially serious underlying medical conditions. Before any hearing aid is prescribed there needs to be a full assessment including a range of tests and a full understanding of a person's hearing environment and lifestyle needs. Only then can a suitable device be recommended. The device then has to be carefully fitted and finely tuned to suit the individual's need. For many, hearing with their new devices will require rehabilitation over time and considerable support may be required before they provide maximum benefit for the user. If you suspect you have a hearing loss you should definitely make an appointment to see a HCPC registered hearing healthcare practitioner for a full hearing test. This normally takes about an hour and most practices will offer these free of charge.

Online hearing screens can be useful but they are not a diagnostic test and cannot tell you what your hearing looks like or what has caused it – it could be something as simple as ear wax or as serious as a brain tumour. An online 'test' can only alert you that your hearing is not normal and that you need to get it properly assessed. Only a fully trained, qualified and registered Hearing Aid Audiologist, using the latest testing equipment, is able to determine the nature and extent of your hearing loss and advise you on the right solution for you.

At Correct Hearing our audiologists are not hearing aid salespeople, but fully trained, highly qualified and very experienced hearing healthcare practitioners.

We are committed to providing the best hearing healthcare service in our region. We provide long-term, ongoing support to all our clients, including regular full hearing assessments and device adjustment – all free of additional charges. We can advise on and supply a variety of assistive listening devices and provide rehabilitation support for clients that need it. We also use the very latest and safest endoscopic earwax removal technology. ■

***This is another area where the Correct Hearing Healthcare service goes beyond just the sale and fitting of hearing aids.***

To make an appointment please phone **0115 961 8351** or email **info@correcthearing.co.uk**

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Also at, Unit 36, The George Centre, High Street, Grantham NG31 6LH Tel: **01476 249319**