

G U I D E T O

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HEARING AIDS &  
COCHLEAR IMPLANTS



**EAR INSTITUTE** 

where excellent hearing begins

Welcome to the Ear Institute,

your trusted advisor in **hearing healthcare.**

The EAR INSTITUTE is a family-owned business with practices across South Africa and Namibia. Since 1975, we have assisted thousands of people every year to improve their hearing and quality of life by providing them with the best possible care and support.

This guide will provide you with a simple overview of hearing and hearing loss, hearing aids, cochlear implants, and the pathway to better hearing.

We trust that it will help you, or your loved one, to make an informed decision about your hearing. We will gladly assist you should you require any further assistance.

**Your Ear Institute Team**

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# BIGGEST HEARING LOSS COMPLAINT

Many people struggle to understand speech in noise. We know that a hearing loss can make people feel **excluded, disconnected, exhausted and lonely.**

Most people with a hearing loss start avoiding family gatherings, birthday celebrations, restaurants, church meetings and even funerals.

If your family (and neighbours) complain that the TV is too loud, it's a sure indicator that you urgently need to have your hearing checked.

*What is the biggest complaint of*

## PEOPLE WITH A HEARING LOSS?

When you cannot hear well, it is frustrating to follow a conversation, and often leads to you missing out on life's important moments, such as the laughter of your grandchild, or staying connected with your family and friends.



# HOW COMMON IS HEARING LOSS?

On average, people wait 7-10 years before they seek help. Statistics show that men are more prone to be affected by hearing loss than women.

The prevalence of hearing loss increases with age. Among those older than 60 years, over 25% are affected by hearing loss.

(Deafness and hearing loss, 2025)



***Hearing loss***  
*is a common problem  
caused by noise, ageing,  
disease and can even be  
heredity.*

# WHY IS GOOD HEARING SO IMPORTANT?



**Hearing is the ability to hear and understand the ordinary sounds of life.**

Good hearing helps you stay connected to the world around you. Detecting sounds like a car horn when crossing the street, a house alarm, your telephone ringing, or your loved one's calling, can ensure your general safety and wellbeing.

People correctly fitted with hearing aids have shared that everyday sounds have become part of their life again and that their quality of life has improved dramatically.

*"I never knew a microwave makes a beep!"*

T. Crous, Johannesburg

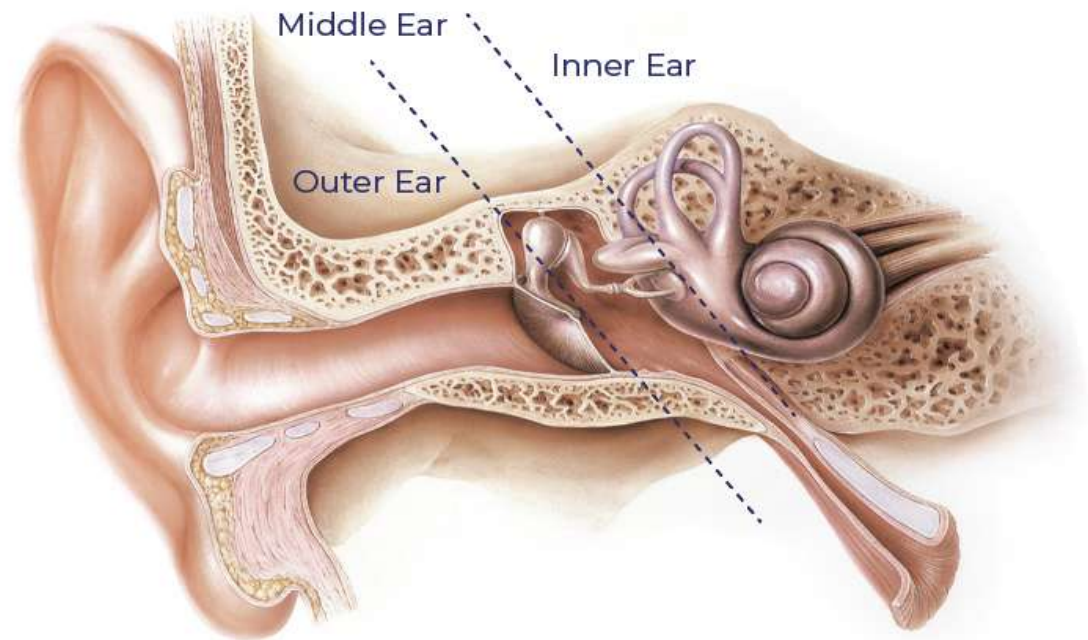
*"The joy of hearing the barn owl in my garden again."*

Dave Pepler, Knysna

*"The pleasure of taking an urgent, hands-free telephone call, while walking my two busy dogs."*

Jan Grobbelaar, Pretoria

## *A closer look inside* **THE EAR**



## HEARING AND HEARING LOSS

# TYPES OF

# HEARING LOSS

1

## Conductive loss

(Outer or middle-ear problem)

2

## Sensorineural loss

(Damage or dysfunction of the inner ear)

3

## Mixed hearing loss

(A combination of the above)

# TWO EARS ARE BETTER THAN ONE



## **This is how we hear:**

Through a complex pathway, sound travels through the outer, middle, and inner ear where it is naturally enhanced. Once sound reaches the inner ear, it stimulates the auditory nerve leading to the brain. The brain then interprets these signals, **and this is how we hear.**

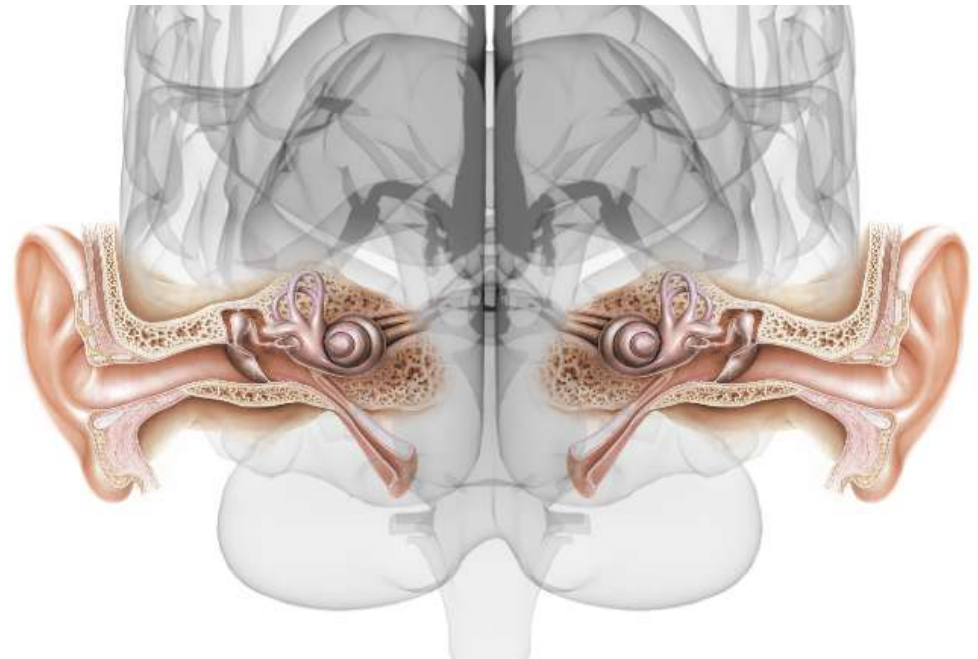
Information fed to our brain from both our normal functioning ears is critically important.

The moment one or both ears are not functioning optimally, the brain is not able to interpret the sounds correctly and is unable to localise sounds. A balanced hearing is important for the localisation of sounds and very important when crossing a street, understanding speech in a noisy environment, e.g. children learning in a classroom or being part of family and friends.

Stimulating your brain through both ears also reduces your chances for the early onset of dementia. (Lin and Albert, 2014)

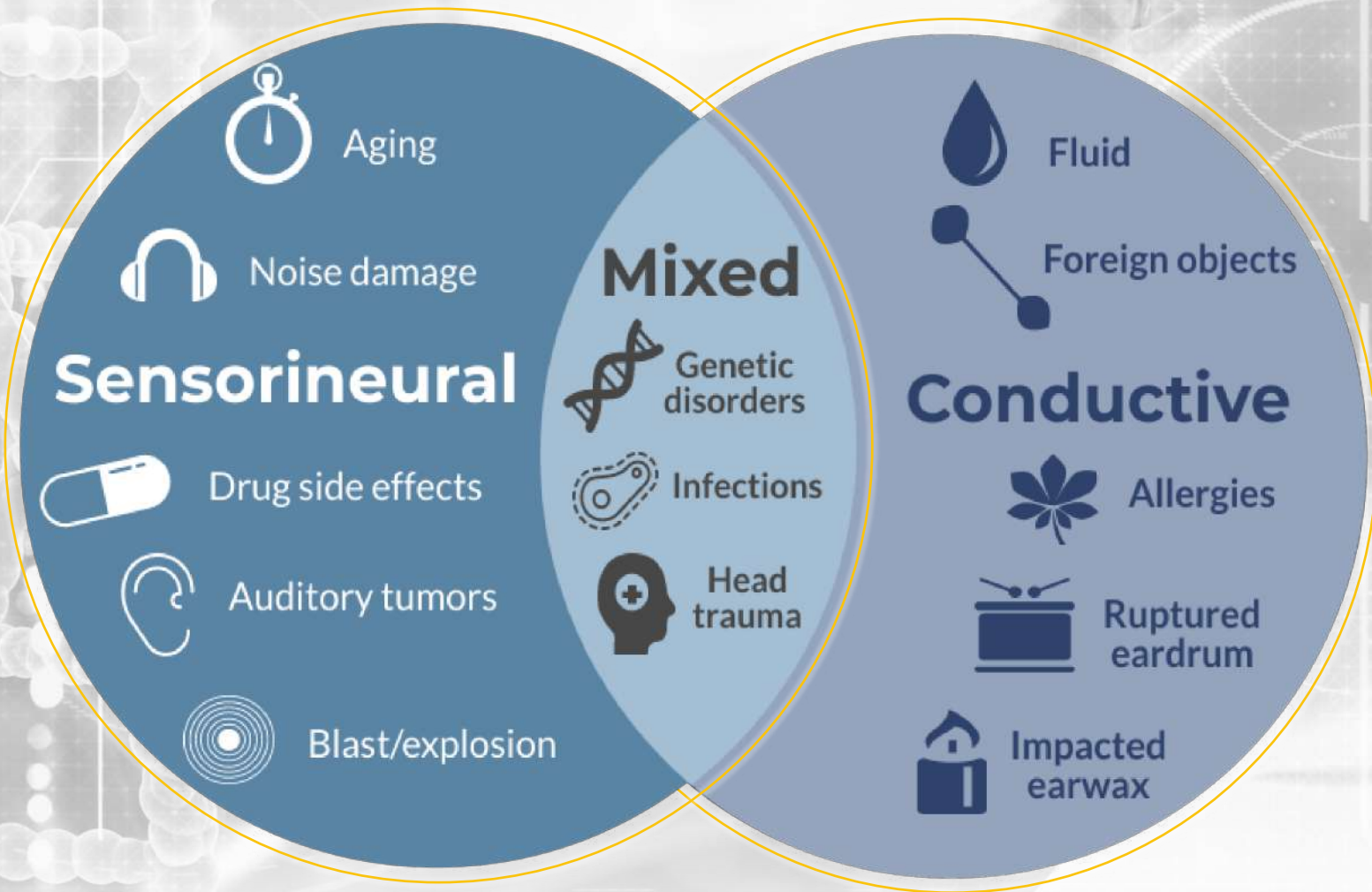
When the brain receives sound from both ears it is more effective in distinguishing between what we want to hear (speech) and what we do not want to hear (background noise)

**Modern hearing aids monitor the background noise, stream information to one another and reduce background noise to optimise speech.** Most importantly, they enable the wearer to localise sounds and give a balanced hearing with stereo sound quality. Persons with a hearing loss in only one ear (unilateral hearing loss) or a hearing loss in one ear and a 'dead ear' on the other side, can also be very successfully helped with a **CROS or Bi-CROS system** (CROS = Contra Routing Of Signal).





# CAUSES OF HEARING LOSS



# DID YOU KNOW?

## Hearing loss IMPACTS YOUR LIFE



### Balance



If you have even a mild hearing loss you are three times more likely to have a history of falling.

Every additional 10dB of a hearing loss increases the chances of falling by 1,4 times.

### Depression



If you leave a hearing loss untreated, it can give rise to a poorer quality of life, isolation and a reduction in social activity that can lead to depression.

### Cognitive Decline & Dementia



People with a hearing loss experience a 30-40% greater decline in cognitive abilities compared to those without a hearing loss.

### Psychological



If you have an untreated hearing loss you are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, anger, frustration, and emotional instability than those who wear hearing aids.

### Safety



Balanced hearing helps you locate sound.

If you have a hearing loss, your ability to differentiate where sound comes from, e.g. a car horn or when someone calls, is compromised.

*It is important to have your hearing checked if you have any of the mentioned conditions.*

# DID YOU KNOW?

## Things that can IMPACT YOUR HEARING

### Smoking



If you are a smoker, you have a 70% higher risk of having a hearing loss.

### Cardiovascular heart health



Your inner ear is extremely sensitive to blood flow.

Inadequate blood flow and trauma to the blood vessels of the inner ear can contribute to hearing loss.

### Hypertension



There is a significant association between high blood pressure and hearing loss.

Hypertension can accelerate hearing loss in older adults.

### Ototoxicity



Toxic medication to the ear. There are more than 200 medications on the market that are known to cause hearing loss, including aspirin, some anticancer drugs and certain antibiotics. Ask your pharmacist.

### Tinnitus



90% of people with Tinnitus also have some form of hearing loss.

Tinnitus can be caused by hearing loss, an ear injury, high blood pressure, stress, or allergies, to name a few.

### Osteoporosis



Evidence has linked osteoporosis and hearing loss, theorising that demineralisation of the middle ear bones may contribute to conductive hearing.

### Obesity



High body mass index and larger waist circumference are associated with an increased risk of hearing loss in women.

### Diabetes



Hearing loss is twice as common in people with diabetes compared to those without.

*It is important to have your hearing checked if you have any of the mentioned conditions.*

*How do I know that I have*

## A HEARING PROBLEM?



If you find yourself agreeing with one or more of the statements below, you might have a hearing loss.

- People seem to mumble when they talk
- I often ask people to repeat themselves
- I have difficulty hearing in restaurants with background music playing
- I get tired of concentrating to understand what people are saying
- I don't always know which direction sound is coming from
- Children and ladies' voices are often difficult to follow
- I can't understand people talking from a distance
- My family or neighbours complain that the TV is too loud
- Cell phone conversations are difficult to follow
- I have a family history of hearing loss
- I have been exposed to loud sounds and have a constant ringing in my ears
- I tested positive for Covid-19

# WHY DO I HAVE A RINGING IN MY EAR?



## Tinnitus is a ringing sensation in the ear.

Tinnitus is a symptom of an underlying condition such as: a food allergy; oxidative stress; age-related hearing loss; an ear injury; a circulatory system disorder; or trauma of the ear (excessive sound like a gunshot, night club or prolonged exposure to noise), to mention but a few.

## People at any age can be affected.

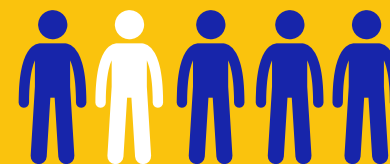
It is important to seek professional help to exclude any serious medical condition. Your first step is to undergo a full audiological evaluation at your nearest Ear Institute.

Based on the outcome, specialised counselling should be followed in the management of your tinnitus.

Treatment options may include: BioArmor antioxidants, hearing aids, stress management, sound therapy, management of food allergies, etc. (Haase et al., 2011)

1 in 5 people are affected by

## TINNITUS



- **BioArmor's world-leading antioxidant formula boosts the immune defence system. Many patients report a decrease in their tinnitus and an improvement in their joint pains, balance, motion sickness and general health, to mention a few.** BioArmor was developed in the USA for the armed forces in Iraq and is available from all Ear Institutes and leading audiologists.

- **Hearing aids** naturally mask tinnitus and are a very effective treatment method with a high success rate. Most types of tinnitus can be successfully managed with the right support.

- **Sound therapy** counterbalances the tinnitus sound with an alternative comforting sound stimulus and has mixed results.

# HEARING AIDS & COCHLEAR IMPLANTS



## Advancements in modern hearing aid and cochlear implant technology.

This technology helps many people **reconnect with family and friends**. Many of today's hearing aids monitor the environment, limit background noise, and focus on the person you are speaking to – **ensuring crystal clear stereo sound quality**.

Modern hearing aids with Bluetooth technology enable the user to **connect** to a variety of

devices used in everyday life, e.g. cell phones, TV's, laptops, etc.

In the 1970s, hearing aids had just 15-30 transistors. Today's modern hearing aids are **70% smaller** and have over **100 million transistors**, enabling them to monitor the environment, stream between devices, **connect to Bluetooth** in stereo, and deliver outstanding speech understanding in noise. The latest hearing aids are **rechargeable with exceptional speech clarity and background noise reduction**. Top-of-the-range models feature **environmental detection** that automatically enhances speech quality—and some even include a dedicated **AI chip for even clearer speech in noise**.

**Modern, fully digital hearing aids are easily programmed to the wearer's individual hearing loss and specific lifestyle.** There are many hearing devices available that include behind-the-ear, in-the-ear, receiver in the canal, cochlear implants, etc.

Your audiologist or hearing aid acoustician will be able to advise you of the best possible solution for your specific needs.



# AM I A COCHLEAR IMPLANT CANDIDATE?



## Enjoy restored hearing with cochlear implants.

With today's **advancements in hearing technology**, an increased number of people with hearing loss (and other auditory disorders) are enjoying restored hearing with cochlear implants.

There is no lower or upper age limit, but in most cases, the person must have trialed hearing aids, unless the hearing loss is of such a severe degree that they cannot be fitted with a hearing aid.

Ear Institutes recommend the **world's most advanced cochlear implant systems**, such as those from **Advanced Bionics** and **Med-El**. These cochlear implants feature innovative technologies with specialized designs to improve speech understanding, even in noisy environments.

The Ear Institute's expert cochlear implant team provides **comprehensive care**, ensuring patients receive the best possible solutions tailored to their individual hearing needs.



## You might be a cochlear implant candidate if you...

- Have difficulty following a conversation with your hearing aids, where you cannot rely on **lip-reading**.
- Have **difficulty following** most telephone conversations, especially when the voice is not a familiar one.
- Have a moderate/severe-to-profound hearing loss in both ears, with **little or no benefit from hearing aids**.

## Children and cochlear implants:

Children can be implanted as young as **10 months of age**.

- Early implantation provides your child with access to sound, which is critical in **developing age-appropriate language and speech skills**.
- There is no upper age limit for a cochlear implantation.

*If you are healthy and able to undergo general anaesthetic, and the cochlear implant unit has deemed you to be an appropriate candidate, your age does not matter. Contact your nearest Ear Institute for more information.*

# HOW DOES A COCHLEAR IMPLANT WORK?



**Cochlear implants restore hearing by sending sound directly to the auditory (hearing) nerve.**

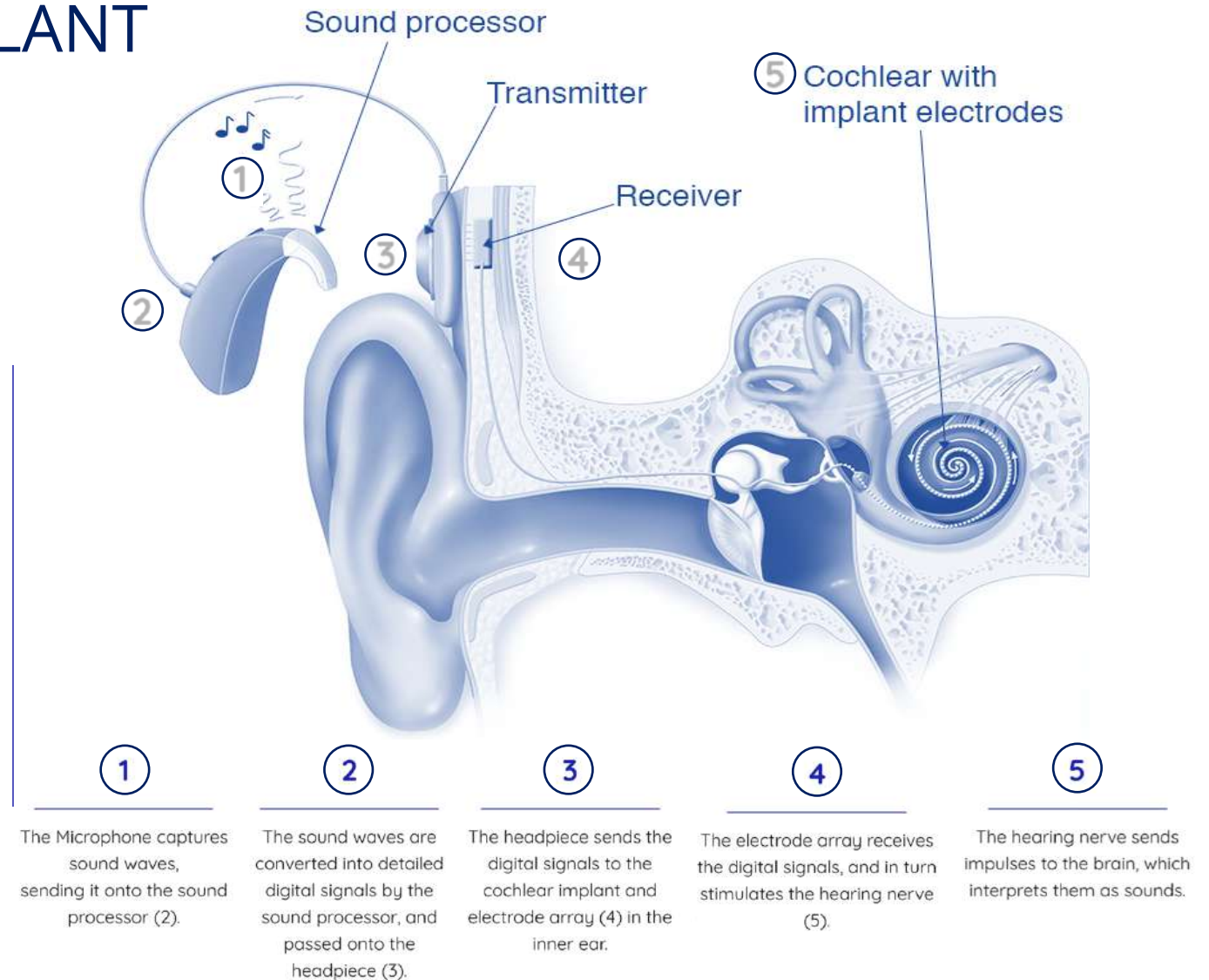
A cochlear implant system includes several advanced components of technology that work together to restore hearing by sending sound directly to the hearing nerve.

## **Internal component:**

A surgeon inserts an electrode array into the cochlea.

## **External component:**

The processor is worn externally and on the ear and connects to the implant via a small magnet.





# HEARING AIDS & COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

*Hearing devices should have*

## THE FOLLOWING FEATURES AND SUPPORT:



### High-definition superior sound quality

Critically important to understand speech in noise



### Automatic directional microphones

For better speech understanding in noisy environments



### Bluetooth connectivity

To all cellular phones



### Rechargeability

For extra convenience



### Smartphone App

Easy adjustments from your phone



### Proper connectivity

To any Bluetooth device



### Onsite service and support

Ear Institutes offer excellent support, including free onsite cleaning services to ensure optimum functioning of your devices, at all times.

# EAR INSTITUTES RECOMMEND

## SWISS-MADE PHONAK HEARING AIDS

- The world's most innovative and trusted hearing aid manufacturer.
- Leading Swiss technology available at Ear Institutes throughout South Africa and Namibia.

**PHONAK**  
life is on



# HOW MUCH DO HEARING AIDS COST?



**‘One size doesn’t fit all.’**

Hearing aids are not a ‘one size fits all’. They differ in price, **features and performance** and can be adapted according to your hearing loss, lifestyle and budget. Keeping in mind that most people require two hearing aids, a complete set may vary **between ±R18’500 to ±R125’000** (excluding professional fees).

Cochlear implant devices cost **from R275’000** – excluding professional and hospital fees.

Most medical aid schemes reimburse the professional fees and contribute towards the cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants. **Ear Institute staff will gladly contact your medical aid to confirm your benefits.**



The South African Revenue Service (**SARS**) offers an **additional medical expense credit** to people living with a disability, including hearing loss.

**SARS BENEFIT**

*For more info  
scan the code*



# WHY THE EAR INSTITUTE?

*We guarantee your hearing will improve*  
**OR YOUR MONEY BACK!**

**Our Ear Institutes are family-owned practices.**  
**Since 1975, we have helped thousands of people every year with excellent hearing.**

## Invested



We take time to listen while you enjoy a Nespresso coffee

## Safe & considerate



We are easily accessible, wheelchair friendly, with safe and secure free parking.

## Supportive & accessible



Our countrywide network offers a 24-hour turnaround time on major services and repairs with free on-site cleaning – supporting you whilst travelling.

## World-leading standards



Modern facilities with state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment.

## Bespoke



We have a wide range of products and services to suit every lifestyle and budget.

## Loyalty



Our battery loyalty programme saves you money.

## International best practice



We adhere to 'international best practice' testing and fitting protocols.

## Solutions



We have a wide range of products to suit every patient's needs. Medical aid rates apply.

## World-leading



We recommend world-leading, Swiss-made, Phonak hearing aids and cochlear implants with an international guarantee.

## SATISFACTION GUARANTEE

We guarantee your hearing will improve or your money back. T's & C's apply.



## MAY RESULT IN:



### ACCELERATED COGNITIVE DECLINE AND ELEVATED DEMENTIA RISK

(Livingston, Gill et al., 2020)



### BALANCE DISORDERS

(Rumalla et al., 2015)



### SOCIAL ISOLATION

Avoiding friends and family gatherings  
(Jayakody et al., 2022)



### CONTINUED FRUSTRATION

Battling to understand speech in noise



### YOUR SAFETY MIGHT BE AT RISK

For example, crossing a road, or missing out on important communication on TV, or with family and friends



### POSSIBLE UNDERLYING, UNTREATED MEDICAL CONDITION

For example, high blood pressure

# HEARING LOSS AFFECTS YOUR LOVED ONES TOO!

“It is not all about you”, as they say. And this is particularly true if your hearing is not what it used to be.

Your hearing loss does not only affect you, but also those around you. It often affects your relationships and communication with friends and family.

Research shows that **untreated hearing loss can be a major cause of stress, especially among couples, leading to the loss of spontaneity and normal everyday interactions.** When communication breaks down, frustration kicks in, leading to resentment, which leads to a further breakdown of communication and intimacy. The result? A sense of loneliness and **isolation for both partners**, and often spouses blame each other’s ability to listen, when in fact it is truly a hearing problem. (Healthy hearing, 2021)

At the Ear Institute we understand this problem. We can help you.



# BRING A FRIEND

*Bring your spouse or friend with*  
TO YOUR CONSULTATION

**We advise that you bring a spouse or friend with for your consultation at the Ear Institute. For many, having a trusted friend or partner by their side helps them feel more comfortable during the consultation.**

- A partner can help you remember important details about the consultation.

Consultations can sometimes feel overwhelming. A large amount of information is shared, and your friend or partner can help you retain additional details that you may have missed. They can also remind you of questions that you want to ask during the consultation, but may have forgotten in the moment.

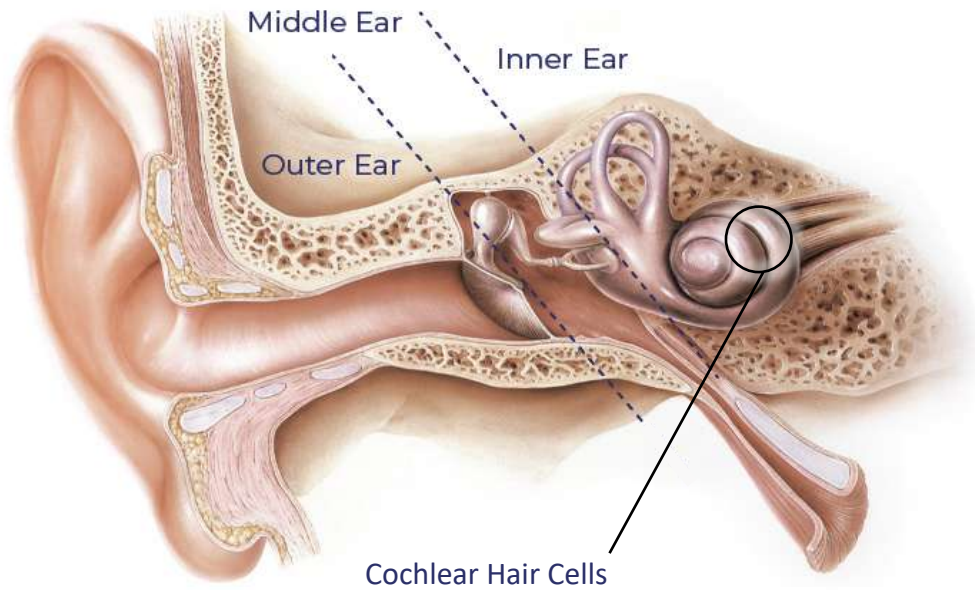
- Involving a trusted person can help you make a more confident decision about your desired options.

They know your everyday life and needs from first-hand experience and can confirm our recommendations.

A face-to-face meeting with the audiologist is the best forum for your spouse or friend to learn what you will need during the first weeks of using your new hearing aids.

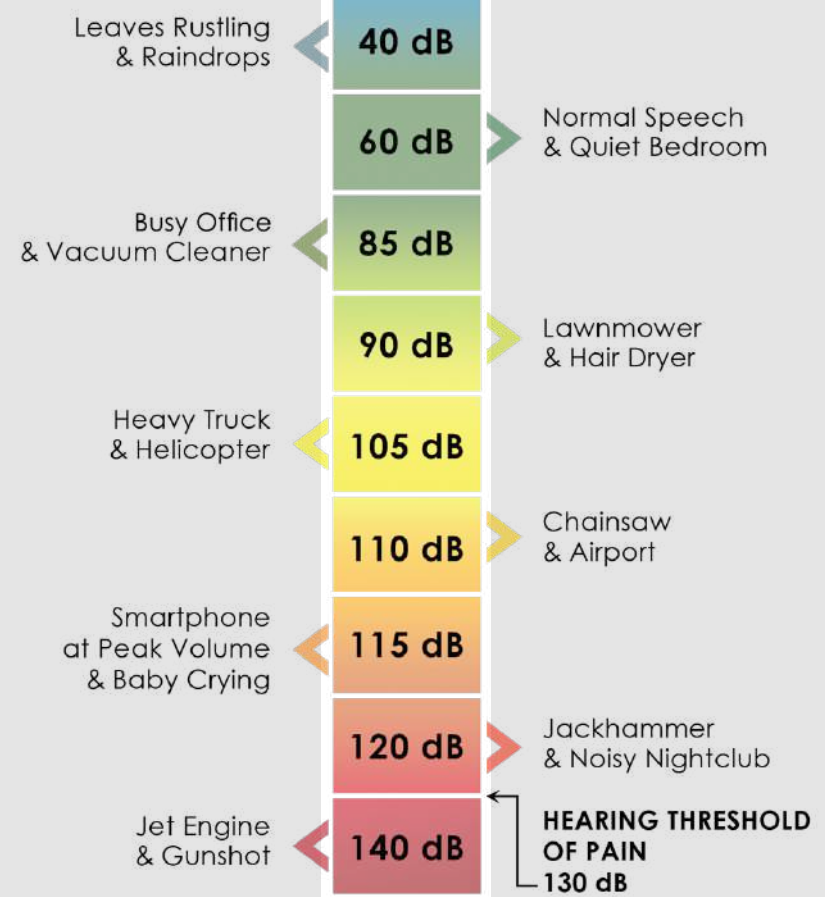
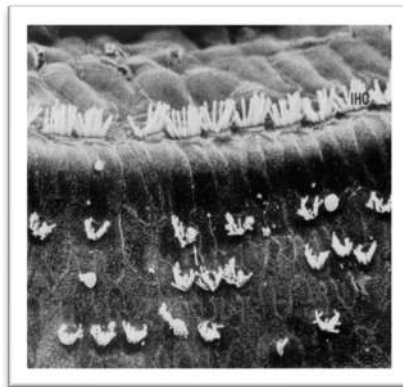
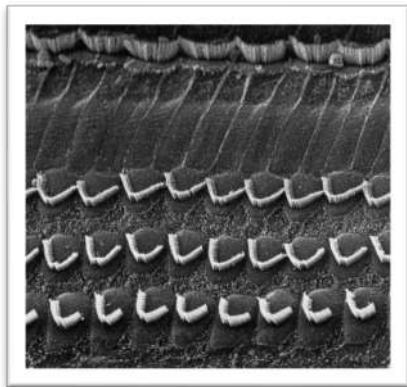


# A CLOSER LOOK INSIDE THE EAR



Healthy cochlear hair cells

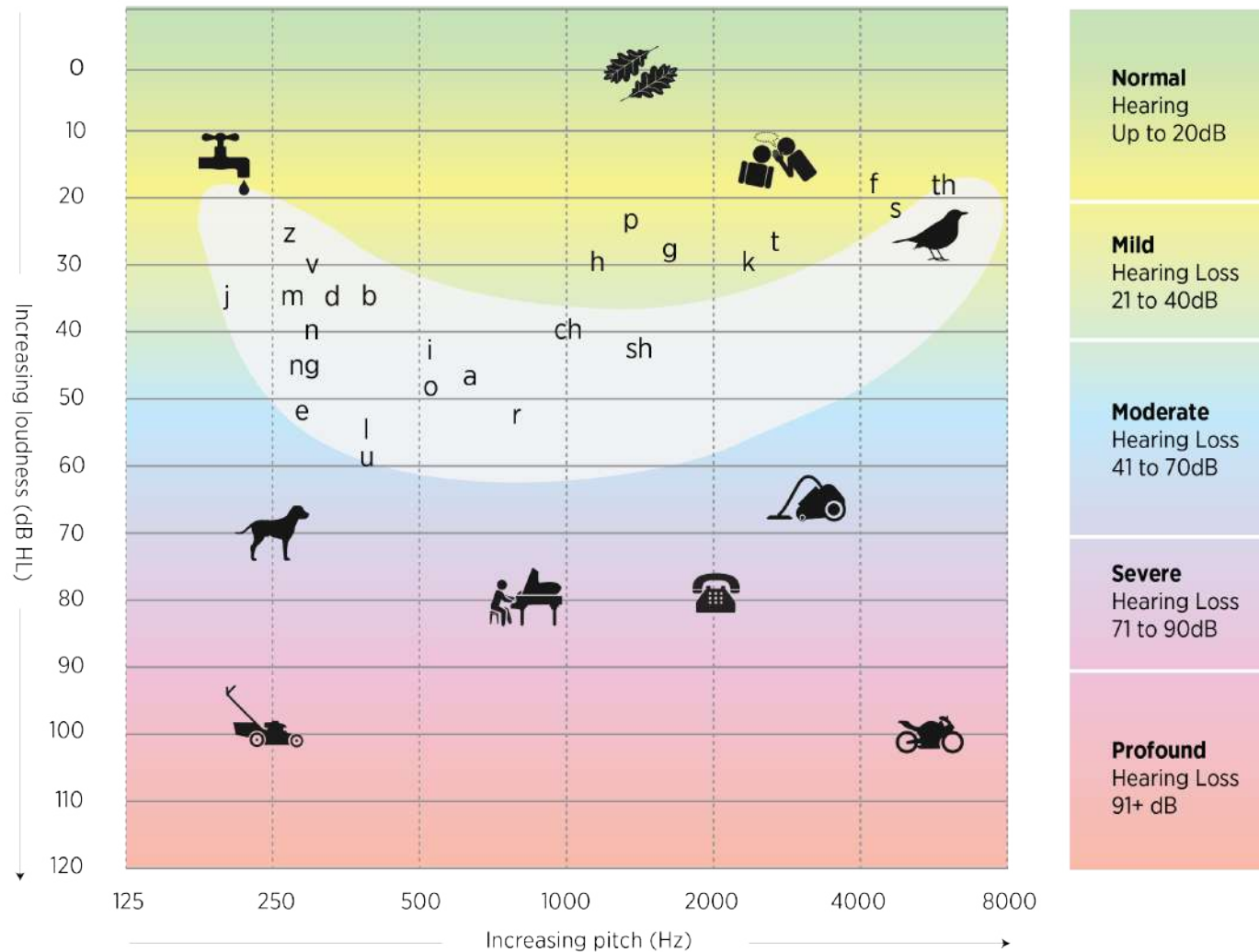
Damaged cochlear hair cells





# YOUR AUDIOGRAM

*The area where the sounds of human speech appears on the audiogram.*



PROFESSIONAL USE ONLY

# CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

## Frank Dunford - Pietermaritzburg

*"The Ear Institute changed my life. I have tried other companies but once I visited the Ear Institute, I received professional and caring*

## N.D. - Johannesburg

*"I never knew it was so easy to get my hearing tested. The whole experience was fantastic!"*

## KykNet Presenter, Dave Pepler

*"Phonak gave me back the joy of hearing the barn owls in my garden again."*

*Through better hearing, we've helped thousands of people with a hearing loss to improve their quality of life.*

## Mr V.R. Meintjies

*"Thank you for connecting me to the beauty of sound. A new world has opened up for me."*

## T.C. - Johannesburg

*"I never knew a microwave makes a beep!"*

## Ms Gillespie - Nelspruit

*"New hearing aid, new phone, new TV, NEW LIFE."*

## Mr Richard Esterhuizen

*"I have no words to describe my Phonak hearing aids! I hear sounds I haven't heard in years. I can also hear people's speech much better now."*

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## OUR NETWORK

Free and safe parking at all **Ear Institutes**.

Your Nespresso Cappuccino is waiting!

### PRETORIA

- QUEENSWOOD (012) 333-3130
- LYNNWOOD (012) 471-4800

### JOHANNESBURG

- ROSEBANK (011) 880-4584
- FOURWAYS (011) 465-7455
- BRYANSTON (011) 463-0321
- ROODEPOORT (010) 746-0100
- BENONI (011) 849-3027

### MPUMALANGA

- NELSPRUIT (013) 755-1430
- WITBANK (013) 656-1775
- MIDDELBURG (013) 282-0773

### WESTERN CAPE

- BELLVILLE (021) 949-2900
- CLAREMONT (021) 683-5590
- SOMERSET-WEST (021) 851-1837
- GEORGE (044) 884-1956
- SEA POINT (021) 023-4431

### EASTERN CAPE

- EAST LONDON (043) 743-2159

### NORTHERN CAPE

- UPINGTON (054) 332-2554

### NAMIBIA

- WINDHOEK (061) 224-720
- SWAKOPMUND (064) 406-954

### NORTH WEST

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- RUSTENBURG (014) 592-0677

### LIMPOPO

- POLOKWANE (015) 291-5989

### FREE STATE

- BLOEMFONTEIN (051) 444-4760

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- DURBAN NORTH (031) 566-4727
- HILLCREST (031) 765-8158
- BALLITO (032) 946-3987
- P'MARITZBURG (033) 345-1060
- SHELLY BEACH (039) 315-0872
- KOKSTAD (039) 797-0068



OUR EAR INSTITUTES  
HAVE BACK-UP POWER

# EAR INSTITUTE

where excellent hearing begins

Contact us on **0861-10-20-30** or visit [www.earinstitute.co.za](http://www.earinstitute.co.za) for an institute near you.