

What is an audiologist?



Audiologists are health care professionals, collaborators, investigators and technology experts.

Hearing care is a journey. And like any journey, it is more navigable with the support of experts that know the best path.

Audiologists are hearing health professionals that will not only provide a map, but they will walk the journey along with you. They approach hearing care with a health care perspective that is grounded on the day-to-day realities of living with hearing challenges, balance disorders or tinnitus.

If you or a loved one has concerns about hearing health, find an audiologist and discuss what to expect from the hearing care journey.

Goals of hearing care

The hearing system includes the ears (which have the smallest bones in your body) and the auditory nervous system.

Hearing occurs in the brain, rather than the ears. As soundwaves move through the outer ear, middle ear and inner ear, microscopic hair cells send electrical signals to the brain to be processed and interpreted.

Just as the hearing system itself is complex, hearing challenges – including temporary and permanent hearing loss – can be equally complicated.

In most cases, damage to the tiny hair cells weakens the signals to the brain. The brain then has to work harder to understand the sounds it is hearing, and this can cause frustration, social anxiety, isolation and other mental health concerns.

The goals of hearing care are to understand any challenges related to the ears and hearing:

- What is the state of the hearing system?
- What is causing hearing challenges?
- How do these hearing challenges impact physical and mental health?
- What is the best treatment, technology and therapy to manage any hearing challenges?

There isn't one solution for every problem. Hearing care professionals have a selection of treatments or approaches – the most well-known is hearing aids. Modern hearing technology does an amazing job of compensating for hearing loss, but the technology is most effective when paired with therapy and on-going optimization.

Since hearing care is complex, various professionals contribute to understanding, treating and managing hearing challenges. Audiologists are central in this process.

What is an audiologist?

An audiologist is trained in diagnosing and treating problems related to hearing loss, tinnitus and balance. They are healthcare professionals who work in various settings, including hospitals, community health centres, schools and hearing clinics.

In Canada, audiologists must have a master's degree in audiology. All audiologists in Alberta are certified by the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists.

Roles of an audiologist

The complexity of hearing loss and balance disorders means that audiologists wear many hats and work alongside other medical and hearing care professionals.

They are creative problem-solvers that go beyond diagnosing issues. Audiologists partner with individuals and families to navigate all aspects of hearing care.

The day-to-day roles include an investigator, collaborator, technology expert and health care professional.

Investigators

Through the administration and interpretation of comprehensive diagnostics, audiologists seek to understand the why, what and how of anyone's hearing challenges. Beyond that, audiologists contribute to research for the identification, treatment and prevention of hearing and balance disorders.



Collaborators

Audiologists speak the language of all professionals related to hearing care. They collaborate with medical providers, including ear, nose and throat doctors, family doctors and pediatricians. They team up with speech pathologists, hearing aid practitioners and other hearing care professionals to ensure you receive comprehensive and holistic treatment for your hearing challenges.

Technology experts

Whether it's biometric hearing aids that monitor your health or Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids, innovative hearing technology is exciting! Audiologists are constantly looking for new opportunities to leverage hearing technology to improve your hearing health.

Health care professionals

Most importantly, audiologists are health care professionals. Along with their comprehensive training, audiologists are also trained in counselling and rehabilitation.

Their high level of education offers a broad range of clinical skills and allows them to provide a wider array of professional services. Audiologists are trained to perform these services for people of all ages.

Their goal is better hearing health, better mental health and better overall wellbeing. Hearing care is health care. Above all else, audiologists want to help you and your family live a healthier life.

When to see an audiologist

Visit an audiologist if you suspect you have hearing loss, if you want to hear better, or if you have ringing in your ears. You can also see an audiologist to understand the current state of your hearing to compare with in the future.

Audiologists are extensively trained in working with seniors and people with special needs. They provide hearing care to children, but first talk to your pediatrician if you have concerns about your child's hearing.

For hearing and balance conditions

An audiologist helps with hearing loss, tinnitus and noise sensitivity (which can make everyday noise difficult to deal with). They can also diagnose disorders that make it difficult to discern differences in the way that words sound.

To understand your hearing

If you do not know the cause of your hearing loss, it is important to see an audiologist to understand what is happening inside your ears and brain.

Audiologists perform comprehensive assessments of the entire auditory system. Along with hearing diagnostics, they also check for damage to the portion of the inner ear responsible for balance. They also perform tests to measure how your brain processes sound. Audiologists will take the time to discuss the noticeable (and sometimes unnoticeable) impacts of hearing challenges on your daily life.

For comprehensive treatment

The most well-known treatment is hearing aids. You may require therapies or counselling to work alongside hearing aids, or you may not need hearing aids at all.

An audiologist will review your health history, lifestyle and results from all diagnostics before recommending the best next steps. If hearing aids are an option, they will walk through the various technologies and features that will suit your daily life. Audiologists can also work with you to treat or manage your conditions through sound therapy, audiologic rehabilitation (to improve hearing) and vestibular rehabilitation (which uses specific exercises to improve balance and alleviate vertigo).

Effective treatments for hearing challenges are personalized to the specific issues and impacts. There isn't one fix for everyone.

If you have any questions

An audiologist can help you find the answers to your hearing-related questions. Their dedication to your health and wellness means they will seek out the answers.

No matter the stage of the hearing care journey you are in, an audiologist will help you understand where you are and how to navigate the next steps.

Start by finding an audiologist near you.

www.aaofa.ca

