

Audiology

SERVICES IN OUTPATIENT SETTINGS



Audiologists are trained health care professionals that specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of hearing, balance, and other auditory disorders. People often work with audiologists in settings such as private practice clinics, group clinics (e.g., with ENT doctors), and in outpatient hospital clinics.



DID YOU KNOW ?

About **10% of the U.S. adult population**, or about 25 million Americans, has **experienced tinnitus** lasting at least 5 minutes in the past year.

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WHO:

Audiologists work with people of all ages, from infants to older adults. They may specialize in a specific area of audiology (e.g., balance, cochlear implants)—or they may serve specialized populations, such as military personnel.



WHAT:

Audiologists working in outpatient facilities provide services that include the following:

- **Conducting hearing evaluations and interpreting results.** This includes a series of tests that determine the extent of a person's hearing loss, if any. The audiologist collaborates with the individual and their family on communication goals and treatment options, which may include but are not limited to hearing aids and other technologies.
- **Managing tinnitus (constant ringing in the ear).** Tinnitus can disrupt a person's life and can affect their mental health. Audiologists provide information and counseling on ways to reduce the impact of tinnitus.
- **Performing vestibular testing for people with dizziness and other balance issues.** This involves a series of tests to determine how a person's balance system works. Audiologists provide treatment options and appropriate referrals.
- **Providing aural rehabilitation.** This includes a variety of services to support people with hearing loss. Audiologists can connect people with peer support groups and recommend technologies such as hearing aids, telephone amplifiers, and TV listening devices.
- **Counseling people on hearing aids.** Hearing aids come in many different types (e.g., in-the-ear, behind-the-ear), with varying features and options. Audiologists work with people on their communication goals and help them determine their priorities and needs. Audiologists also help with ongoing maintenance and adjustments of hearing aids.
- **Identifying candidates for cochlear implants and bone conduction devices.** Unlike hearing aids, these are surgically implanted devices. Not everyone who has hearing loss is a candidate for implantation. Audiologists provide counseling, work with other professionals as part of the implant team, and program external devices.
- **Removing earwax.** Too much earwax may cause difficulty hearing, tinnitus, and other issues. An audiologist is trained to remove ear wax without damaging the ear.

WHERE:

Audiologists work in private audiology practices, nonresidential health care facilities, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, ENT medical offices, clinics, and state public health departments.

HOW:

Some insurance providers require a referral from a physician to see an audiologist. Most insurance companies will cover the testing and diagnosis portion of audiology services. People should check with their individual insurance provider to understand what audiology treatment services are covered under their plan. Audiologists can also discuss options based on a person's listening needs and budget.

WHY:

Hearing, balance, and other related disorders are complex conditions. When left unaddressed, these disorders can impact a person's physical and mental health, socialization, education, and employment. Audiologists diagnose hearing and balance issues and specify treatment plans based on an individual's needs and preferences.