

Use of Hearing Aids to help your tinnitus

Are two hearing aids always better than one?

General benefits of two hearing aids over a single aid

- Wearing two hearing aids keeps both ears actively involved in listening. Studies¹ have shown the ear without the hearing aid over time loses its ability to hear and understand. (This may be described to you as the auditory deprivation effect).²
- Using two aids means lower volume of sound can be used than at one ear. This also reduces the risks of feedback hiss or whistling from your hearing aids.
- Improved ability to hear and understand particularly in noisy situations like being part of a group or in a restaurant. This is partly due to the improved ability to separate speech from the surrounding background noise.
- Ability to tell the direction of sounds and hear sounds from a further distance. Two hearing aids can quadruple the distance you can clearly hear speech from.
- Quality of sound and the overall experience. In a similar way to enjoying listening to a good quality stereo sound system, having two sound receivers & speakers (your two hearing aids) produces a better sense of sound balance and clarity.³

What if I only have hearing loss in one ear?

A hearing test will provide you with an accurate assessment of your hearing ability in both ears and it is common to have different levels of hearing loss across your two ears.

Your hearing aids can then be adjusted by your audiologist to suit your balance of hearing and given the benefits stated above you will usually be better off with two rather than one hearing aid.

However, if your hearing is normal in one ear usually a hearing aid is not needed for that ear.

Does having tinnitus change the decision process?

¹ Silman S, Gelfand SA, Silverman CA. Late-onset auditory deprivation: effects of monaural versus binaural hearing aids. *J Acoust Soc Am.* 1984;76(5):1357-62.

Gelfand SA, Silman S, Ross L. Long-term effects of monaural, binaural and no amplification in subjects with bilateral hearing loss. *Scand J Audiol.* 1987;16(4):201-7.

² Munro KJ. Reorganization of the adult auditory system: perceptual and physiological evidence from monaural fitting of hearing aids. *Trends Amplif.* 2008;12(3):254-71.

³ <http://blog.starkeypro.com/true-or-false-two-hearing-aids-are-better-than-one/>

Hearing loss & tinnitus in both ears

If you have tinnitus and loss of hearing in both ears the decision process is simple – you will be better off with two hearing aids. Having hearing loss in both ears is called bilateral hearing loss. Sometimes there may be a small amount of hearing loss that's related to the tinnitus, but you may feel hearing voices is fine. Even with a small hearing loss hearing aids can help your tinnitus.

Hearing loss & tinnitus in only one ear (opposite ears)

If you had hearing loss say in your left ear and tinnitus only in your right ear (known as unilateral hearing loss and unilateral tinnitus) – the decision process is not so simple. If your audiologist is only focused on treating your hearing loss they may just recommend one hearing aid. However, given the benefits of being able to use a top quality hearing aid with Bluetooth capability for sound therapy that will help your tinnitus we believe there is merit in trialling two hearing aids, one side set with low volume. The one in your left ear set up to improve your hearing, but both hearing aids used for the sound therapy.

Exceptions to the two hearing aid rule.

Not everyone does better with two hearing aids, we recommend trial of two aids, however, if you hear better with just one discuss this with your audiologist.

One special case is when Hearing loss & tinnitus is in only one ear (and the same ear), while trialling two hearing aids, one side set with low volume is suggested, often one aid will prove to be enough.