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## Hearing Aid Technology Improves Quality of Life for the Hearing Impaired

By Max Stein

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Hearing is one of those things we tend to take for granted. Unless we lose our hearing, it's not something we think about the mechanics of very often. We put more thought into the arrangement of our surround sound speakers than our hearing. As a result, if we develop hearing impairment, we don't take into account some of the hearing aid options available. Though not all hearing loss can be treated with hearing aids, the most common forms of hearing loss typically can be treated.

Hearing aids have developed significantly over the years. Technological developments have allowed hearing aids to "hear" better for us while becoming so small, they can barely be seen.

The basic concept of a hearing aid has been to amplify all sound - this includes voices as well as other "noise" in the background. Now, if you have hearing loss in a particular frequency range, but your hearing aid amplifies all sounds - the net result is an amplification of sounds you can already hear, but no improvement in the sounds you can't. This result leads to a lot of frustration.

On the other hand, new hearing aids offer amplification for specific frequency ranges, while leaving the rest at a normal level. The result is better hearing and less frustration for the hearing aid user. Contemporary hearing aids can be custom made to cover your specific type of hearing loss or pre-programmed to adjust to a variety of environmental settings.

Another advantage contemporary hearing aids offer concerns the type of microphone used to amplify sounds. Without getting too complex, microphones come in two main styles - unidirectional and omnidirectional.

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A unidirectional microphone has a limited, focused range and its use in a hearing aid reduces amplification of surrounding sounds. This type of microphone is good for individual conversations or watching TV.

An omnidirectional microphone picks up a variety of sounds in a wide physical range. In a hearing aid application, this amplification would be good for attending a sporting event, a church service or a business meeting.

Contemporary hearing aids, especially those with digital technology, utilize both types of microphones and can automatically detect which type of sound to amplify in any given situation.

Some people who have used hearing aids in the past felt disappointed in past performance. However, great strides have been made in hearing aid technology and hearing testing that make it worthwhile for those suffering hearing loss to get new tests performed, or upgrade their current hearing aids.

Max Stein, Salt Lake City, UT, USA <http://www.hearing-aid-match.com> Max Stein is a freelance writer

who writes about a variety of contemporary topics. [maxstein\\_9@hotmail.com](mailto:maxstein_9@hotmail.com)

### **Hearing health resolutions for 2005**

**By Max Stein**

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With a New Year upon us, the annual tradition of forming resolutions of self-improvement is definitely in season. While many articles about New Year's resolutions focus on things like careers, education or relationships, this article discusses your hearing health and what you can do to make it better.

For those of you don't give your hearing any thought, because you can hear just fine, make the resolution to have your hearing tested. In most cases, hearing loss is gradual, so you may not notice that you have hearing impairment until it becomes profound. A hearing test will give you peace of mind for the coming year. If your hearing is healthy, you won't have anything to worry about. On the other hand, if you have developed some hearing impairment, you'll be glad it was diagnosed early.

There may be some readers out there who know they are hard of hearing, but have done nothing about it. Fear, or a sense of loss could be holding you back from enjoying life to the fullest. Today's hearing aids possess advanced technology that can improve your hearing and your lifestyle. Best of all, they're smaller than ever. Some "completely in the ear canal" (CIC) models are virtually invisible. Resolve to overcome your fears about your hearing loss and schedule a consultation with a qualified hearing aid dispenser in your area. Once you face your fears and overcome, you'll be glad you made this resolution.

Others reading this article may own hearing aids, but don't wear them. Or you may know someone like

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that. If this is your situation, resolve to find out why. Are your hearing aids uncomfortable? Do they not provide noticeable amplification? Are you concerned about what other people think? Do you think a hearing aid is a sign of advancing age? Whatever the reason is you don't wear your hearing aid, it needs to be addressed this year. There could be many reasons for these problems and a qualified hearing aid dispenser can address all of these questions. This year resolve to improve your hearing health.

Hearing is something many of us take for granted. Get your hearing tested or resolve your hearing health issues. This year, put your hearing health at the top of the New Year's resolution list!

### Hearing Aid Match

Max Stein is a freelance author who writes about a variety of contemporary topics.  
maxstein\_9@hotmail.com

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