



Benefits of Binaural Amplification

If you have hearing loss in both ears, Dr. Gaskin and Dr. Conrad may explain that you may benefit from binaural amplification. This recommendation also depends on your speech discrimination ability in each ear, but the vast majority of our patients have largely symmetrical speech understanding scores. Binaural amplification simply means wearing two hearing aids. You may wonder if two hearing aids are really better than one. But, if you have hearing loss in both your right and left ear, it probably is better. Research has consistently shown that there are measurable benefits to wearing two aids over one.

One ear (monaural) versus two ears (binaural)

Typically those with bilateral (both left and right) hearing impairment will choose to aid the better ear or the ear that is recommended to be best for amplification if only purchasing one hearing instrument. **However, monaural amplification leads to 1) issues with localization, 2) sound quality, and 3) limited improvement in hearing and speech understanding in the presence of background noise.** We have two ears, one on each side of our head for a variety of reasons! Many of our patients explain that they can hear rather well in quiet situations, but struggle to understand others in the presence of background noise. These patients would certainly benefit from two hearing aids rather than just one.

If your hearing loss is different on one side, or perhaps you have a normal hearing ear, there are solutions for you as well. Two hearing instruments are still recommended, but they work a bit differently. There are specialty types of hearing aids, called CROS and BICROS which allow for some of the benefits of binaural fittings. These devices use a microphone transmitter on the poorer ear to wireless send the signal to the other, better hearing ear. Even if you are deaf in one ear, you may still be able to hear sound originating from the poor side- you just hear it in your other ear. This technology is constantly improving, in terms of sound quality, cosmetics, and ease of use.

In summary, research shows that wearing two hearing aids rather than just one will lead to 1) improved sound quality in quiet and 2) especially in background noise, as well as 3) improved localization abilities (being able to tell where a sound is coming from). For most patients, this is the better choice; however, if your lifestyle is such that you feel you would not benefit from binaural amplification, please feel free to ask the audiologists and they will be happy to discuss your concerns with you.

Adapted from www.swentnm.com/resource/benefits-of-binaural-amplification.