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If you have hearing loss in both ears, it will probably be recommended that you purchase two hearing aids. This is not some scam by hearing healthcare professionals to make a better profit. There is science behind this suggestion.

You will probably have greater benefit if you choose two aids over one, and you can help prevent hearing processing deterioration. Your hearing healthcare provider will make recommendations based on your hearing loss and hearing needs.

While you may be hesitant to purchase two aids, especially if you have a "better" ear, it is advisable to be fit with two aids during your trial period which is typically 30-60 days. During your trial period, you can experiment with one versus two aids. Wear two aids for a week, one aid the next, and continue to experiment to determine your perceived benefit.

There are other reasons for wearing two aids, however, one being that there are great advantages of improved hearing, but the other being much more pressing in that auditory deprivation can be prevented. Auditory deprivation is a condition that essentially leads to poor speech processing and discrimination due to a lack of brain stimulation.

In essence, the brain "forgets" how to hear. The longer your brain is without a sound rich environment, the less likely it will be to properly process those "missing" sounds when they are reintroduced with amplification later. Wearing two aids will prevent further deterioration of speech understanding.

Other advantages include, but are not limited to: improved speech comprehension in quiet and in noise; greater directionality and localization, a boost in volume, greater feeling of balance, and a reduction in feedback.

Speech comprehension in quiet and in difficult noisy listening situations is improved with binaural amplification. At the level of the brain, binaural listening provides a greater amount of information regarding the sound environment.

Central processing of the sound, in turn, is able to improve its selectivity. Essentially, binaural hearing allows the brain in conjunction with the ear to determine what sound is more important for communication.

Localization and directionality are improved by binaural amplification through the reduction of a "head-shadow effect". This is the quieting of sound in the ear that is further in distance from the source of the sound due to the "shadowing" of the head. Many people naturally may turn their better ear to the sound source to reduce this effect. However, when wearing one aid, it is difficult for this head-shadow effect to be compensated for.

We tend to assume that the direction that is heard the loudest is where the sound is located. Wearing only one aid, when bilateral hearing loss is present will make sound always seem louder from the aided ear. With two aids, however, this effect is lessened, and more likened to natural hearing.

Wearing two aids provides a boost in volume of almost double the perceived sound! This need for less volume to be output by the receiver of the aid reduces distortion of sound output, improving

overall sound quality! This volume boost also reduces the chance of feedback (aid whistling) when binaurally amplified. The louder the volume is set on a hearing instrument, the more likely feedback will occur. Less feedback occurs with two aids.

Overall, patients with binaural amplification report a greater sense of balance. Wearing two aids provides "stereo" sound. It would be similar to listening to headphones with only one phone working versus both. With both, sound is more balanced and comfortable to listen. Binaural hearing aids provide a similar effect, with a more comfortable listening experience.

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