

The places of hearing care



Audiologists are central to audiological research and care in hospitals, clinics and in the community.

Hearing clinics are only one place where hearing care happens.

Prevention, diagnostics, acute care and ongoing support are all necessary for hearing health, which is why hearing care happens in many places.

Audiologists are central to research-based hearing care for all ages. By diagnosing and treating problems related to the entire audiological system, they contribute to a multi-disciplinary approach wherever hearing care is important.

Hearing care goes beyond the ears

Hearing loss is often the focus of hearing care – and for good reason. Healthy hearing contributes to quality of life, and prolonged hearing loss can contribute to depression, isolation, social anxiety and dementia.

Balance disorders are also an important part of hearing care. Located in the inner ear, the vestibular system processes sensory information required for controlling balance, spatial orientation and eye movements. Dizziness, vertigo and other balance issues can result from damage or disorders in the inner ear.

Although vestibular issues are often related to hearing loss, they are not always connected. Vestibular disorders can occur from physical damage from an ear infection, whiplash or a blow to the head, or exposure to sudden or significant pressure changes. Long-term use of some antibiotics can also cause permanent damage to the inner ear, and other medications can cause temporary dizziness.

Vestibular and balance problems are among the most common reasons to visit an emergency room. Unfortunately, follow-up care after an emergency room visit tends to be limited.

Considering the complex interconnections between the ears, brain and body, hearing care relies on collaboration between medical professionals and experts in the auditory system.

The interconnectedness of the auditory, vestibular and neural systems requires audiologists to collaborate with physicians, neurologists, physiotherapists and speech pathologists.

Audiologists are also involved with research to improve the science of hearing care, which can take place at universities, hospitals, hearing clinics, and they participate in policy development and management for hearing health care in the public health sector.

Where hearing care happens

Audiologists work wherever hearing and ear-related care is important – from hospitals to in the community.

In hospitals and medical centres

Canada's health care system delivers a multidisciplinary approach to hearing health care.

Audiologists who work in public health care are central to care regarding acute issues and advocating for ongoing or follow-up support for hearing and balance problems.



In Alberta, a patient who seeks treatment from an emergency department for a hearing or balance disorder may be referred to one of Alberta Health Services' Community Audiology clinics, which perform diagnostic hearing assessments, vestibular assessments and cochlear implant candidacy assessments. These centres do not dispense or fit hearing aids, but they can provide information and referrals to hearing clinics.

At hearing clinics

Hearing clinics are entirely focused on hearing care, so they have the equipment and expertise to dig deeper into hearing and balance issues.

Clinics can administer the most comprehensive diagnostics to understand the why, what, and how of hearing-related challenges. In addition to dispensing and fitting hearing aids, clinics also offer therapies and treatments for hearing and balance disorders.

When timing is critical, hearing clinics offer more flexibility for appointments and do not require a referral from a doctor or other medical professional. For example, balance issues can come and go, and it is much easier to identify and diagnose the problem when symptoms are present. Over time, the body is capable of compensating for vestibular problems and masking the effects. It can be difficult to diagnose vestibular concerns if they are not assessed quickly or ignored.

In the community

Audiologists provide testing and education in workplaces, schools and beyond.

Companies with workers who are at a high risk of job-related hearing loss – such as construction workers, miners and airline ground workers – often conduct on-site hearing testing and promote best practices for the prevention of noise-induced hearing loss.

Educational audiologists work as part of a multidisciplinary team in schools. They help students with hearing challenges participate in classroom learning and advocate for student support services and resources.

All of these systems work together to improve prevention, acute care and ongoing support for people struggling with auditory and vestibular disorders. The focus of an audiologist working in any setting is on what is best for the people they are helping, and they will make referrals and collaborate as needed to optimize hearing health care.

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