

Have You Ever Wondered Why Hearing Aids Cost So Much?

Why has the cost of other electronics such as iPods or flat screen televisions come down in price over the years, but hearing aids still cost up to several thousand dollars **each**?!!?



Part of the answer is that hearing loss is often a complex condition that traditionally requires sophisticated, fully customized instruments, and hours of time spent between the audiologist/hearing aid dispenser and the patient for fitting, education, adjustments, cleanings, etc. (and time is money).

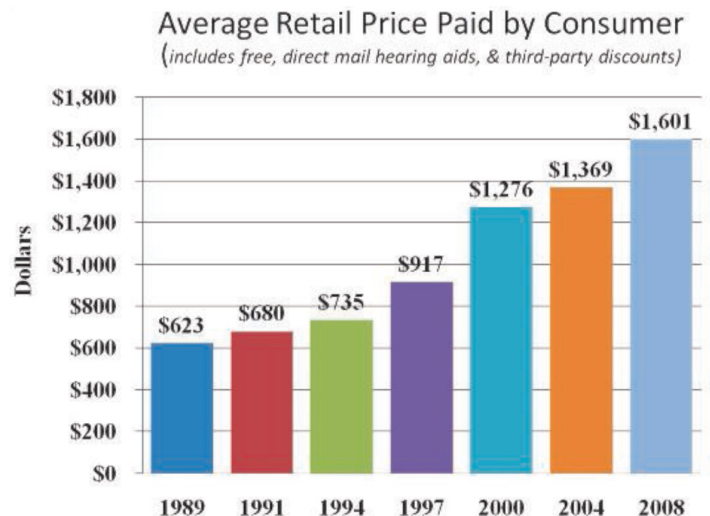
Part of the answer is due to capitalism and market conditions in the USA that allow hearing aid companies to mark up costs to the maximum level that people are willing to pay. This is similar to the pharmaceutical industry where the exact same drugs are much cheaper in places like Canada and Mexico.

In fact, the same hearing aid companies that sell traditional hearing aids here in the USA, make certain models that they **only** distribute in developing countries for less than \$300 (due to economic conditions in those countries). As you may expect, these inexpensive hearing aids are

not available here in the USA, probably because offering such inexpensive options would preclude customers from buying the hearing aids that cost much more and generate a much larger profit for the hearing aid company.

A third part of the answer is that high hearing aid prices can be attributed to monopolistic pricing and regulations that discourage competition. This is due in part to federal regulation, which has created a **hearing aid distribution monopoly** (CTWatchdog).

In the United States, the only professionals that can distribute hearing aids are audiologists, hearing aid dispensers, and physicians (MD's). The audiologist and dispenser lobbies have had significant success at making sure that, other than physicians, they are the only ones allowed to dispense hearing aids. This is why you cannot simply go to the drugstore and purchase a hearing aid like you could a pair of **reading glasses** (*"The Noisy Debate over Hearing Aids: Why So Expensive?" Wall Street Journal, March 24, 2004*).



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So why do hearing aids cost so much?

Regardless of the retail price of a hearing aid (several hundred or several thousand), the manufacturing costs are often between \$80 and \$300. Irrespective of the advanced features on a hearing aid, regardless of the advertising and marketing, nothing can take away from the fact that **most hearing aids contain less than \$300 worth of parts and materials** (casing, digital chips, microphone, circuit board, etc).

In fact, the State of California determined that hearing aids of the same quality as those hearing aids that sell for two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per ear could be produced with replaceable batteries and offered as over-the-counter products for less than \$200 (*CA Assembly Bill 311*).

According to the Veterans Administration, hearing aids that the public receive for \$1500-\$2500 are obtained by the VA for approximately \$350 (*Veterans Affairs Prosthetics & Special Disabilities Programs 2009*).



A hearing aid manufacturer will mark up his hearing aid between 100% and 400%, depending on features and competition. The remainder of the cost represents the costs to cover the hearing aid dispenser, which compensates them for their time, effort, expertise, overhead, and their profit.

The only conclusion that one can come to is that the hearing aid laws and the manufacturing / reselling chains are very inefficient and is forcing the cost of hearing aids to remain high.

"As an Ear, Nose, and Throat physician, I see people on a daily basis who would benefit from hearing aids, but cannot afford the hundreds or thousands of dollars often needed for them."

***MDHearingAid** was designed to be the first line of medical-grade hearing aids starting under \$200."*

Dr. Sreek Cherukuri, MD
Board-Certified Otolaryngologist
Founder of MDHearingAid, Inc.

Surprisingly, its own industry trade association has concluded that hearing aid manufacturers could help more people, sell many more hearing aids and make more profit if prices were reduced (*CTWatchdog*).

"The prices are obscene," says Aaron Thornton, the recently retired director of the audiology program at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, which is affiliated with Harvard Medical School. "The technology can be made for hundreds of dollars; the rest is distribution" (*Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 2004).

MDHearingAid® was founded by a board-certified Ear, Nose, & Throat physician (MD) to help the millions of people with hearing loss who cannot afford traditional hearing aids. MDHearingAids are simple yet effective hearing solutions without the middlemen, and without all of the markup so you can enjoy a quality hearing experience at a price you can afford. They have been tested by physicians and audiologists and are recommended by physicians to their patients.

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