

What is an Audiologist?

Audiologists are professionals who have a master's or doctorate degree in audiology and specialize in the prevention, assessment, diagnosis and management of hearing and balance disorders. Audiologists work directly with clients of all ages and their families/caregivers. Certain services may be provided by unregulated professionals or assistants, who work under the supervision of an audiologist.

In Alberta, audiologists are recognized by the following protected titles/designations: *audiologist, Aud and R.Aud*. Audiologists who have completed a clinical doctorate degree in Audiology (AuD) may also use the protected title Doctor or Dr. when providing a health service.



What Do Audiologists Do?

Audiologists work in a variety of settings including public practice settings such as schools, hospitals and community health centres. They may also work in private practice clinics and universities. Audiologists provide a broad range of professional services including the following:

- Assessment, diagnosis and management of:
 - Hearing loss and other auditory disorders (i.e., tinnitus or ringing in the ears); and
 - Vestibular (balance) function disorders.
- Use of specialized equipment to provide a non-medical diagnosis of auditory or vestibular dysfunction location and to assess “difficult to test” populations (i.e., pediatrics);
- Provide patients with timely access to a specialist (otolaryngology) through direct referral;
- Work collaboratively on multidisciplinary medicine, rehab and (auditory) implant teams;
- Prescribe, fit and dispense hearing aids and assistive listening devices for all ages;
- Provide education to clients, family and educators on the use of hearing aids and assistive listening devices;
- Develop strategies for effective communication for those at risk of educational (auditory) disadvantage, learning and communication difficulties;
- Develop/manage hearing screening and conservation programs for those at risk of hearing loss;
- Education and supervision of students, professionals and assistants;
- Leadership in academic and clinical research in audiology; and
- Established in administration, management and policy development roles.



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Why Are Audiology Services Important?

Hearing loss, one of the most common chronic physical conditions at birth and as we age, is due to illness, accident, medication and noise exposure and has been linked to diabetes and dementia. Individuals of any age whose hearing impairment is not properly managed are at risk for the following: compromised speech understanding; delays in speech-language development; educational and literacy deficits; reduced cognitive integrity and social interaction (across the lifespan); isolation and depression. Early identification and management of hearing and balance disorders is key to long-term success.



The ability to hear effectively is essential to maintaining quality of life. According to StatsCan (2016), hearing loss can have serious consequences including: social isolation and depression; safety issues; reduced income and employment opportunities; poor academic performance and language development in children and youth.

Reliability and accuracy of assessment leads to proper diagnosis and effective rehabilitation. Inappropriate use of hearing aids and assistive listening devices also places individuals at risk and may result in further hearing damage.

For more information about audiology and how to access services,
please visit: www.acslpa.ab.ca