

Goodbye Big Bananas

By Lauren McFadden

Nanette, a retired commercial pilot, didn't think she was a candidate for hearing aids. "I kept thinking, 'I am 63 years young.' I'm not old enough for a big bulky hearing aid," says Nanette. "So I put off going to the audiologist to have my hearing checked."

Nanette's story is not an unusual one. According to research, one out of six baby boomers have some level of hearing loss.

Despite this fact, many individuals still hesitate to take the step of getting hearing aids. Like Nanette, they worry they'll be thought of as old. And they fret about how hearing aids might look. Everyone's mind goes back to their grandparent and the "big banana" hearing aids they had.

But hearing aids are not what they used to be back in your grandparent's day. They are now incredibly small, discreet, beautiful to look at and comfortable to wear all day. In fact, hearing aids are now actually winning international product design awards.



These powerful little computers on the ear can also do amazing things. They can connect to your smartphone and your television. They make music sound better and they can isolate even the softest voice in conversation in a crowded restaurant.

"I had no idea that hearing aids were so sophisticated. I didn't know they could actually gather data on the listening situations where I was spending my time, and the kinds of sound environments I was encountering," says Nanette. "It is an

absolutely awesome piece of ingenuity. I guess you could compare it to the autopilot of an airplane. It just hums along and does everything automatically without me having to touch anything."

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Like Nanette, many people may suspect they have hearing loss but don't think they are old enough for hearing aids or worry how they'll be perceived. However, if you find yourself struggling to hear conversations, looking at people's lips to communicate or if you are consistently turning up the volume on the TV or radio to hear, it is possible you too may have hearing loss.

Laura McFadden is the Senior Marketing Manager for Product Brands at Unitron. Laura is responsible for integrated global product launches to build Unitron's brand and product awareness. For more information, visit www.unitron.com.

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