Mail Order/Internet Hearing Aids

CONSUMER INFORMATION SHEET 5

Purchasing a hearing aid by mail order/internet may seem inexpensive, but there could be hidden costs.

Know your rights and the seller’s responsibilities:

• California law provides that mail order/internet hearing aids may only be purchased through a dispenser licensed by the California Hearing Aid Dispensers Bureau.

• The law states that when hearing aids are purchased by mail order/internet there must be no fitting, selection or adaptation of the instrument.

• By law, the seller may give no advice with respect to the taking of an ear impression (ear impressions are made to ensure the proper fit of a hearing aid).

• The law also requires that, prior to purchasing a hearing aid through mail order or the Internet, you must provide a statement signed by a physician, audiologist or licensed dispenser that verifies direct examination of your ear.

Beware of potential risks:

• To work effectively, hearing aids must fit right. If a mail-order/internet sale doesn’t involve personal contact with a licensed dispenser, it’s difficult for you to benefit from a proper fitting.

• Follow-up evaluation, which is important to ensure the hearing aid is working appropriately and meeting your needs, probably isn’t available.

• It may be difficult to get a refund from an out-of-state seller. According to California law, if you are not satisfied with a hearing aid, and the hearing aid has not been specifically fit for your particular needs, you may receive a full refund if you return it to the seller within 30 days of receipt.

When preparing to purchase a hearing aid, remember to:

• Always deal with a licensed Hearing Aid Dispenser, to take best advantage of California’s consumer-protection laws. Ask the dispenser if they’re licensed in California, call the Bureau or check the Bureau’s Web site to verify license status.

• Read the fine print on advertisements. If a pitch seems “too good to be true,” it probably is.

To verify a dispenser is licensed or find more helpful consumer information, visit the Bureau’s Web site at www.dca.ca.gov/hearingaid.