

US Approves Apple AirPods to Be Used as Hearing Aids

今回は、AppleのAirPodsが補聴器として使えるようになったという興味深いニュースです。身近なガジェットが医療レベルの補聴器として活躍するなんて、驚きですね。ちなみに補聴器は英語で「hearing aid」、音を増幅することは「amplify」と言います。他にもdevice（機器）やbattery life（バッテリー寿命）など、ガジェットならではの単語が出てきますので、ぜひレッスンで使ってみましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

The American government has approved the use of Apple AirPods as hearing aids.

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently announced it had approved new hearing aid software created for some AirPods [devices](#). An Apple software release this week launched the system on the devices.

Apple said its AirPods Pro 2 are equipped with the software. The company added that the design will [permit](#) users to turn their AirPods into a medical-strength hearing aid device.

The system aims to increase specific sounds in real time, including parts of speech and elements within a user's environment. Apple says another goal of its software release is to get more people to try hearing aids.

An estimated 30 million Americans—about 1 in 8 Americans over the age of 12—have hearing loss in both ears. Millions could see improvements from hearing aids. But most have never tried them, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders says.

Many others have tried assistive devices but choose not to use them. The reasons include high cost, poor quality, poor fit, how the devices look or other reasons. But in recent years, there has been a push in the U.S. to get more people to try them.

In 2022, [federal](#) rules changed to permit some kinds of hearing aids to be sold without a doctor's order, or prescription. Such moves aimed to bring better and less costly models to patients.

The highest-quality hearing aids can cost from \$1,000 to \$2,500, or even more. But some over-the-counter models sell for between \$400 and \$500, said Elizabeth Stangl, a hearing expert at the University of Iowa. She spoke to The Associated Press.

Stangl said some of the less costly models are only effective at raising sound levels. But they lack the personal settings and noise blocking tools that can make hearing aids most helpful. AirPods cost \$249 on Apple's website, and sometimes less from other sellers.

The launch of the software is part of a series of health tools Apple has released over the years. Most of them were built for the Apple Watch. These include several tools for checking heart and oxygen levels.

Apple's software release also includes built-in tests to help users find out if they have hearing loss and, if so, how [severe](#) it is. Those who do have hearing loss can then set specific amplification levels.

Experts say there are other, similar headphone devices on the market that could also be used to increase sound levels for people with hearing loss. But many agree the AirPods addition is a good one, largely because of the way it could help normalize hearing aids for the public.

Barbara Kelley is the director of the Hearing Loss Association of America. She told the AP that AirPods are considered "mainstream" and already widely used. This could get people to try the devices if they have been resistant to the look of traditional hearing aids.

Kelley noted that many health conditions have been linked to hearing loss. These include depression, dementia and greater risk of falls. The majority of people with hearing loss are over age 60, but it can affect younger people as well, including those who suffered a hearing damaging event.

"Everything we do, all our relationships, whether it's personal or in our work life, involve hearing conversation," Kelley said. "We're finding now that the sooner that people can pay attention to their hearing health, the better."

The University of Iowa's Stangl noted the AirPods solution does come with possible [issues](#) some people may not like. Fit and comfort during long use might be one of these. And while other hearing aids are built to last through a whole day or more, she said the battery life of the AirPods does not permit for that. She also said that wearing AirPods might send a message to others that the person does not want to be disturbed or spoken to.

“But we’re hoping that more people will try it and realize, ‘Yeah, these do help,’” Stangl said.

I’m Bryan Lynn.

Bryan Lynn wrote this story for VOA Learning English, based on reports from The Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France-Press and Apple.

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[VOA](#)

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. device (n.) a machine

You may not use cameras or other recording devices at this concert.

2. permit (v.) to make possible; to allow

A washing machine permits us to save a lot of time when washing clothes.

3. federal (adj.) related to the national government

According to federal law, you must drive on the right side of the road.

4. severe (adj.) bad

The woman in the accident did not have any severe injuries.

5. issue (n.) a problem

Recently, I've been having some issues with my laptop.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. Why does Barbara Kelley think more people should use hearing aids?
2. Why do many people choose not to use hearing aids?
3. According to Elizabeth Stangl, what are some possible issues with using AirPods Pro 2 as a hearing aid?
4. Do you think it is a good idea to use AirPods Pro 2 as a hearing aid? Why or why not?
5. What things can you do to protect your hearing?