

Baycrest Hearing Services

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HEARING AIDS



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WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM HEARING AIDS

Hearing aids will not restore "normal" hearing.

Your hearing in quiet should be improved.

Hearing in moderate background noise should be improved.

Hearing in noise will not be as good as hearing in quiet.

Hearing aids do not eliminate background noise. Higher technology hearing aids do reduce some background noise and you may hear and understand through the background noise. This occurs only if your hearing is not severely impaired and if you do not have any central auditory processing problems.

Soft speech should be audible, although not always entirely intelligible, conversational speech should be comfortable, and loud speech should not be uncomfortable.

No whistling should occur if the hearing aids are seated properly. Keep in mind it is normal to have whistling while inserting or removing hearing aids, or when you put your hand over your ear.

The hearing aids should fit comfortably.

Your own voice should be "acceptable". Your voice may seem louder or different in quality at first, but with time you should adjust.

It takes time and use to fully achieve the benefits of hearing aids.

You may hear well across the room but continue to have difficulty hearing from one room to another.

HEARING AIDS ARE ONLY PART OF THE WHOLE PROCESS OF HEARING BETTER AGAIN

It takes time to realize full hearing potential.

Some sounds may appear strange initially, including your own voice, footsteps, birds, water running from a tap and newspapers rustling.

There are accessories that work with hearing aids that can improve listening in more difficult situations. Additionally speech-reading and practising communication strategies are of benefit.

You may still have trouble hearing in some noisy situations.

You may have to modify your environment for better hearing.

GETTING USED TO HEARING AIDS

- Takes motivation, determination and patience
- Any reservations or negative feelings you have about wearing hearing aids must be overcome
- As your brain adjusts, conversation and background noises will slowly sort themselves out
- Give yourself a month or two to adjust to the hearing aids during the trial period
- You must help your friends and family understand the limitations and benefits of hearing aids
- Always try to position yourself close to the person you are listening to
- Try to use all your powers of observation to assist your hearing through lip reading and the use of context in the conversation.

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM HEARING AIDS YOU MUST WORK WITH YOUR HEARING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL. SOME KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER ARE THE FOLLOWING:

Try to be well rested and bring any devices you need such as eyeglasses or magnifiers to your appointment so that you can better follow instructions.

It is often helpful to bring a family member or caregiver with you to your appointments.

TIPS FOR ADJUSTING TO HEARING AIDS

Start wearing the aids at home where the noise level is low and listening is easy.

If your hearing aids have a volume control or remote control, find a comfortable volume starting at a low level and gradually increase the volume until you can hear comfortably. Your hearing health care professional may have set a comfortable start-up volume for you.

Adjusting to a hearing aid is a gradual process that involves learning to listen in a variety of environments and becoming accustomed to hearing different sounds. Try to get used to your hearing aids in non-stressful situations a few hours at a time. Start by getting used to listening to sounds in your own home such as rustling paper, running water, creaking floors, the refrigerator motor, the air conditioning.

Listen to your own voice. Initially it may sound louder or deeper in pitch. It may seem to be coming from a different location in your head or throat. This usually goes away as you get used to the hearing aids. If you cannot get used to it, let your audiologist know.

Do not tire yourself out. Gradually “break in” your hearing aids like you would a new pair of shoes. Do wear them every day but start out wearing them for as long as you feel comfortable. Slowly increase the amount you wear the aids until you can wear them all of your waking hours. If you start to get tired, take the hearing aids off and give yourself a break.

QUESTIONS NEW HEARING AID USERS ASK

SHOULD I WEAR MY HEARING AIDS FULL TIME?

You do not have to wear the hearing aids in situations where they do not improve your hearing (for example, while vacuuming at home or at a very noisy wedding).

The more you wear them, the easier it is to adjust to them.

WILL WEARING HEARING AIDS MAKE MY HEARING WORSE?

No, the opposite may be true. Research shows that hearing comprehension can deteriorate faster in people who do not wear hearing aids.

The “Use it or lose it” principle applies.

HOW LONG WILL MY HEARING AIDS LAST?

Mechanically, a good hearing aid can last many years (4 +).

Most hearing aids have a 2-3 year warranty.

Many factors determine the life of a hearing aid including

- how well you take care of it
- how much wax builds up in your ears (wax can damage the hearing aid receiver)
- humidity levels
- body chemistry (salts and acids in the skin)

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE HEARING AIDS HURT MY EARS?

You should not experience discomfort while wearing the aids. If you do, let your audiologist know immediately.

WHY DO THE HEARING AIDS PICK UP SO MUCH NOISE?

Hearing aids amplify all sounds within range of their microphones. This means that unwanted noises will often be amplified. Hearing aids have gotten better at reducing background noise in recent years, especially the higher performance levels of hearing aids. In addition some hearing aids have smartphone apps that can help the user to control the background noise or better focus on a particular speaker.

If your hearing loss happened gradually over time, you have gotten used to not hearing certain sounds around you (floors creaking, water running, birds chirping, fans and air conditioning).

When you get your hearing aids, you suddenly hear all of these sounds again and that can be a bit disturbing.

With practise and patience, you will gradually learn to better ignore the noise and to concentrate on the speech.

WHY DOES MY OWN VOICE SOUND SO LOUD WHEN I WEAR MY HEARING AIDS?

Your mouth is very close to the hearing aid microphones and therefore sounds louder than a person a few feet away.

Because of your hearing loss, your voice may have gotten louder over the years in order for you to be able to monitor it. When wearing hearing aids, you may start to speak more softly.

There is something called the *occlusion effect* and is very common for new hearing aid users. When you plug your ears with your fingers, you will usually find that your own voice sounds as if you are in a barrel. When you block your ear canals with the hearing aids, a similar effect can take place - you hear your voice vibrating in your skull and it sounds louder and possibly hollow. Your audiologist may be able to improve this for you by adjusting your hearing aid; however, most people get used to it over time.

WHY DOES MY HEARING AID WHISTLE?

Whistling, or hearing aid feedback, can be caused by any of the following:

- An improperly fitted hearing aid (too loose)
- A vent on the hearing aid may be too large
- You may not be inserting the aid correctly
- You may have a build-up of earwax
- The hearing aid could be defective and need repair

See your audiologist if you have recurrent hearing aid whistling. Remember that it can be normal for the hearing aid to whistle if you cover it with your hands.

HEARING AID MAINTENANCE

THINGS YOU SHOULD DO:

- DO** carefully read your hearing aid manufacturer's operating instructions.

- DO** wipe the hearing aids with a dry tissue upon removing them.

- DO** inspect your hearing aids every day to make sure the sound outlet and microphones are not blocked with wax or other debris.

- DO** remove wax from the sound outlet using the special tool (generally a brush and/or pick) supplied with the hearing aid. (See the "Cleaning Your Hearing Aids" section).

- DO** remove the hearing aids before swimming, bathing, having your hair cut, styled or blow-dried.

- DO** know when your warranty expires and have your hearing aids checked before that date.

- DO** insure your hearing aid for loss and damage after the warranty expires.

- DO** store your hearing aid and your batteries out of reach of young children and pets.

- DO** handle your hearing aid over a soft surface. That way, if you drop it, it is less likely to break.

- DO** remove your hearing aids for CAT scans, MRIs or other electromagnetic procedures.

DO remove the batteries if you store your hearing aids for any extended length of time.

DO turn your hearing aid off and open the battery door when not in use. This does not apply to most rechargeable hearing aids.

DO carry a spare battery with you at all times if your hearing aids use regular hearing aid batteries.

DO store the hearing aid in the case provided to you. Always store it in the same place to avoid misplacing the aid.

DO store the aid in a dry area at room temperature. Your bedroom is a good choice.

DO keep your hearing aids properly serviced. See your audiologist at least once a year to have your ears and hearing instruments cleaned and checked.

DO use a Dri Aid kit to prolong the life of your hearing aid. This is a special kit that has silica crystals or pellets in a jar. When the hearing aid is placed in the jar and tightly sealed, it will remove humidity from your hearing aid.

THINGS YOU SHOULD NOT DO:

DO NOT expose your hearing aids to high temperatures. Do not keep your hearing aids in the bathroom, on a radiator, in a sunny window or in the glove compartment of your car. Do not place the hearing aids near stoves, ovens radiators, and heat lamps or in direct sunlight. Do not wear the hearing aids when using a hair dryer.

DO NOT expose your hearing aids to cold temperatures – do not store the hearing aids in the fridge, in your car in winter, on your window sill etc. Hearing aids can function well when outdoors

even during the winter. However, after extended periods in the cold, the batteries may lose power. If this occurs, just let the aids naturally return to room temperature and power should be restored.

DO NOT expose your hearing aids to moisture. Hearing aids should not be worn in or near saunas, steam baths, regular baths, vaporizers, or showers. Protect the hearing aids from rain or snow. Perspiration can also damage hearing aids. If the hearing aids get wet, let them dry naturally with the battery doors left open, or place them in a special hearing aid dryer that can be purchased from your audiologist. Never dry a hearing aid with a hair dryer or put it in an oven of any kind.

Remove your hearing aids for swimming, bathing or hair appointments.

DO NOT use cologne or hairspray while wearing your hearing aids. Make sure these cosmetics have dried before inserting your hearing aid.

DO NOT use water or any other liquid to clean the hearing aid.

DO NOT attempt to repair the hearing aid yourself. If cleaning the aid and changing the battery do not fix the problem, bring the hearing aid to your audiologist to be checked.

DO NOT drop the aid or bang it around.

DO NOT use any tools other than the tools provided by your audiologist/dispenser to clean your hearing aids.

ABOUT YOUR BATTERIES

There are increasing numbers of rechargeable hearing aids available now. For many of these, the lithium-ion battery is built into the hearing aid and is not accessible to the user. The following information applies to hearing aids that use conventional hearing aid batteries that must be managed by the user.

There are 4 different battery sizes (10, 312, 13, and 675). Make sure you always buy the right size batteries for your hearing aids.

The tab should be removed from the battery at least 60 seconds before installing it into the hearing aid. During this 60 seconds allow the side of the battery that was covered by the tab to take in air. This is the positive (+) side of the battery.



Battery life depends on the size of the battery, the drain produced by the hearing aid circuitry, hours of use per day, and listening conditions. If you have wireless hearing aids and you do a lot of streaming, such as many cell phone calls, wireless streaming from your TV, audio books, etc., the battery life will be reduced. If the battery is not lasting as long as expected, track battery life by placing removed battery tabs on your calendar. This will help you determine the average battery life.

Contact your audiologist for the expected battery life in your instruments.

Store batteries in a cool, dry place. Leave the tab in place until you are ready to install the battery. Do not carry loose batteries in your pocket or purse, as contact with other metal objects may short-circuit the batteries.

Always check the expiry date on your batteries to make sure they are fresh.

Always carry extra batteries with you.

Remove batteries before placing hearing aids into a dry aid kit.

When your hearing aids are not in use, swing open the battery doors. This will ensure the best battery life.

Remove the batteries from the hearing aids if you are not going to use them for a period of time. This prevents possible damage due to leakage of battery fluid.

Keep batteries away from children, pets and medications. If a battery is accidentally swallowed, seek medical attention immediately.

CLEANING YOUR HEARING AIDS

IN-THE-EAR, IN-THE-CANAL, AND COMPLETELY-IN-THE-CANAL HEARING AIDS

When you remove your hearing aid, wipe it off with a clean, dry tissue.

Always check the opening of the hearing aid to make sure it is not clogged with wax.

Clean your hearing aid daily using the cleaning tools provided: usually a small brush and/or wire wax loop. Be sure to brush the canal opening from below. This will prevent wax from getting into the hearing aid.



HOW TO BRUSH THE CANAL OPENING OF YOUR HEARING AID

It is important to brush your hearing aids daily. Gently brush across the sound outlet at the canal end of the hearing aid. It is best to hold the hearing aid such that the sound outlet is either pointing downwards or sideways when you brush it, and then the wax and debris fall *away* from the hearing aid.



Some wax cleaning tools.



This is the sound outlet of the hearing aid.

If it is blocked the aid will not work.

Using the wire loop to clean the canal opening of your hearing aid.

Gently insert the loop into the opening (not too far!) and scoop out any wax. **Try using the brush first.**



HOW TO BRUSH THE MICROPHONES OF YOUR HEARING AID

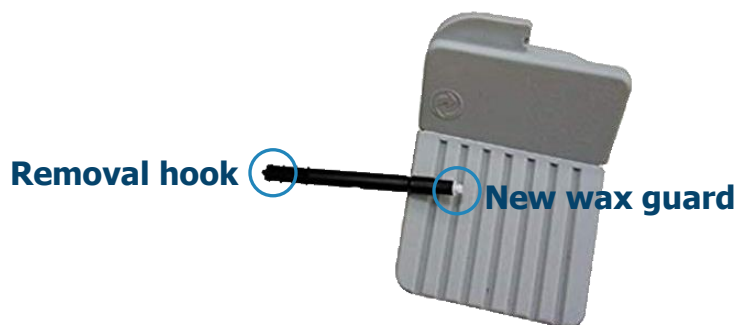
You can use your brush to clean the microphone opening of your hearing aid.

Gently pass the brush over the microphone to remove any dirt.

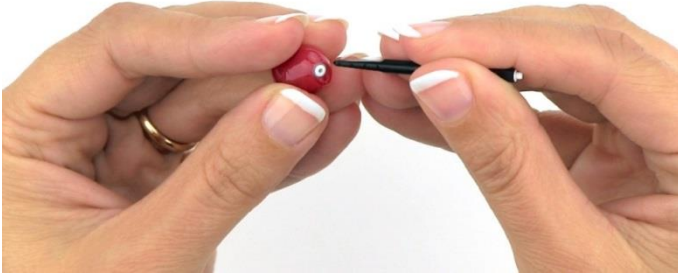


HOW TO CHANGE THE WAX GUARDS

Many hearing aids come with a wax guard to protect the hearing aid from damage due to wax. The wax guards need to be replaced either on a regular schedule, or as they become blocked. One end of the wax guard tool removes the soiled wax guard and the other end provides a fresh one to install.



1. Insert the removal hook into the used wax guard that is currently in the sound outlet.



2. Pull the wax guard straight out.

3. Now turn the tool around so that the used wax guard is away from the hearing aid sound outlet and the new one is in position to be inserted.

4. Insert the new wax guard into the opening of the sound outlet and gently press it into the metal ring.



5. Pull the tool straight out. The new wax guard will automatically detach from the stick.

6. Discard the stick with the used wax guard.

Wipe the earmold daily with a clean dry tissue.

Always check the opening of the earmold to make sure it is not clogged with wax.

You can remove the wax from the opening of the earmold by using a small brush or wire wax loop.



The tubing that runs from your earmold up to your hearing aid hardens over time and will need to be replaced every 8-12 months.

Receiver-in-the-Canal (RIC) hearing aids usually have wax guards that need to be maintained and changed. Please see the section above "How to Change the Wax Guards".



USING THE TELEPHONE WITH A HEARING AID

WITH A TELEPHONE PROGRAM

A telephone program has a separate circuit inside your hearing aid for phone use.

When the telephone program uses a t-coil the microphone of the hearing aid turns off. Instead, the t-coil picks up the electromagnetic field generated by your phone and amplifies it so you can hear.

Using a t-coil will eliminate the annoying whistling sound you get from holding the phone too close to your ear

You may pick up some interference from fluorescent lighting or computers (buzzing sound).

Some telephone programs use the hearing aid microphone, either instead of a t-coil or in combination with it

HOW TO POSITION THE TELEPHONE RECEIVER

If you have an in-the-ear or in-the-canal hearing aid, avoid pressing the hand piece tightly against your ear or the hearing aid may whistle (feedback) unless the hearing aid microphone has been disabled for the telephone. Angle the phone toward your ear.

If the hearing aid continues to whistle, consult your audiologist. Further adjustments may be necessary.



Behind-the-ear hearing aids require that the handset be held in a special position.

This is because your ear is blocked up and you will not be able to hear well if the handset is placed in the normal position next to your ear canal. Instead, position the handset towards the top of your ear where the hearing aid microphones are located.



You may wish to purchase a special amplified telephone. There are several models to choose from, both corded and cordless.

USING A CELL PHONE WITH HEARING AIDS

Many of the newer hearing aids are now cell phone compatible. Some hearing aids will connect directly to the cell phone by Bluetooth, others require an intermediary device to connect the hearing aids to the cell phone. These connecting devices are accessories obtained from the hearing aid manufacturer and are usually either worn around the neck or clipped to a lapel.

When the hearing aids are connected wirelessly to the cell phone the call will be heard in both hearing aids with good, clear sound. Depending on the phone model, the user may be able to engage in hands-free calls.

Another feature of cell phones that can help hard of hearing listeners is the availability of video calling apps. These apps allow the listener to see the face of the person she or he is conversing with.

ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

Despite all the improvements in hearing aid technology through the years, there are still situations where hearing aid users have difficulty when relying on hearing aids alone.

The following situations can be very difficult

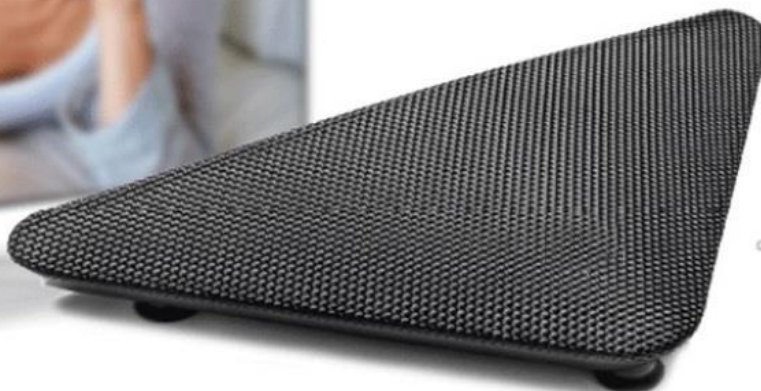
- listening when there is background noise
- listening to a talker over a distance
- reverberant spaces
- television

Most of these problems cannot be fully alleviated with hearing aid signal processing alone.

For this reason assistive listening devices such as FM systems and hearing aid wireless accessories were developed. The aim of these devices is to improve the clarity of the desired signal and the signal-to-noise ratio, that is, how much louder the desired sound is than the unwanted background noise. Please discuss these options with your audiologist.



WIRELESS TV STREAMING





HEARING AID TROUBLESHOOTING

ISSUE: FEEDBACK (SQUEALING OR WHISTLING)

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE SOLUTION
Volume adjustment of the hearing aid may be too high	Turn volume down
The earmold or hearing aid may not be properly seated into the ear	Remove the earmold or hearing aid and re-insert it into the ear.
Excessive wax may be in your ear canal	See your doctor or audiologist to have your ear canals checked for wax
The earmold or hearing aid may not fit properly.	See your audiologist or dispenser who will ensure the best fit possible

ISSUE: INTERMITTENT SOUND (SOUND CUTS IN AND OUT)

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE SOLUTION
Moisture may have accumulated in the hearing aid	Use a dri aid kit overnight to remove moisture.
Low hearing aid battery	Try a fresh battery
The internal components or a switch may be damaged	See your audiologist.
The battery contacts may be corroded	See your audiologist, who can clean the contacts.

ISSUE: HEARING AID IS WEAK OR DISTORTED

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE SOLUTION
Weak battery	Change battery
Receiver (canal opening) clogged with wax.	Clean canal opening with brush that came with the hearing aid. Change wax guard if applicable.
Microphone (on front of hearing aid near battery door) clogged.	Gently brush across the microphone to remove debris. Do not insert sharp objects as this may damage the hearing aid.
Excess wax in ear	Have ears checked and cleaned.
Volume set too low.	Turn up volume control.
Hearing aid broken or change in your hearing.	See your audiologist to have the hearing aid checked and possible hearing test.

ISSUE: "BUZZING SOUND"

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE SOLUTION
Battery compartment not closed completely	Gently close battery door
Weak battery	Change battery
Hearing aid set to "telephone setting" (not applicable on every hearing aid)	Change setting back to "microphone"

ISSUE: NO SOUND AT ALL

PROBLEM	POSSIBLE SOLUTION
The battery may be weak or dead	Replace it with a fresh one. Charge the hearing aid if it is rechargeable.
The battery door may not be completely closed	Be sure the battery door is closed completely (snapped shut)
The battery contacts may be corroded	See your audiologist or dispenser to have contacts clean
Battery inserted wrong way.	Make sure battery is inserted correctly.
Volume set too low.	Turn up volume control.
The aid or earmold may be clogged with wax.	Clean the opening daily with a soft brush and/or wire loop (provided with your hearing aids)
If the hearing aid is a behind-the-ear type, check to be sure the tubing is not twisted or plugged.	Hold it up to the light and look for drops of moisture in the tubing. Be sure the tubing has not become hard or cracked, and that is still firmly attached to the earmold

Microphone clogged with dirt or debris.

The microphone is on the outside and may also become blocked with debris. Use a brush or blow gently across it with air to remove debris. Do not insert sharp objects as this may permanently damage the hearing aid.

TIPS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Optimizing Hearing

- 👉 Sit close to the listener, between 3 – 6 feet away



- 👉 Speak slowly and clearly, slightly louder than normal.
- 👉 Do not shout.
- 👉 Keep sentences short and simple
- 👉 Paraphrase sentences you have to repeat
- 👉 Ensure there is no background noise or music where possible (turn off the TV or radio)
- 👉 In restaurants or social gatherings, choose seats away from noisy areas
- 👉 One speaker at a time!!



Use of Visual Cues

- 👉 Ensure your face is clearly visible to facilitate speech reading
- 👉 Keep the room well lit, with the light on your face not in the listener's eyes
- 👉 Do not cover your mouth or eat while speaking

Some Other Things That Help

- 👉 Get the listener's attention before speaking
- 👉 Inform the listener of the topic of conversation and alert her/him when the topic changes
- 👉 Ask her/him to repeat any important information to ensure it has been heard correctly
- 👉 When in doubt, ask the person how you can facilitate communication

IMPORTANT: Be sure to include the hearing-impaired listener in all discussions pertaining to her/him.

