



How to use your hearing aid



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Your new hearing aid

Your hearing aid is the first step towards better hearing. There is no doubt that, with practice, it will make a real difference to your quality of life.

Please take the time to read this guide, as it will help you get the best out of your new hearing aid. It will prepare you for what your audiologist will explain to you at your fitting appointment, and it also contains extra information about how to use and look after your aid. It will also explain tactics that will make it easier to understand what other people are saying, and finally contact information for some useful organisations.

Normally you will be given an appointment 6 weeks after your hearing aid is fitted. After this appointment you will usually be discharged. If you require any assistance with your hearing aid after this, such as a faulty aid or new mould, you can contact us on 01493 452354

What does the NHS provide?

Your hearing aid is provided free on loan. It is yours for as long as you need it, but it remains NHS property.

The batteries for your hearing aid will be supplied to you free of charge. A member of the audiology team will explain how to get new batteries when you need them. You will also be given a service book for your hearing aid, in which the hearing aid centre staff will note down any changes they make to the aid, when you are given batteries and so forth. You should always bring it with you when you come to the centre for anything to do with your hearing aid.

Please look after your hearing aid. The Audiology Department will repair or replace it free of charge if it goes wrong. However, there may be a charge of £75 if it is lost or damaged through misuse.

Note on private dispensers

If you bought hearing aids privately this does not prevent you from getting hearing aids free of charge through the NHS. The NHS cannot help you to pay for the private purchase of hearing aids, or provide batteries for them.

How a hearing aid can help

What you can expect

Hearing aids cannot give you perfect hearing, but they can help you to hear everyday sounds like the doorbell, the telephone ringing and the kettle boiling. They can also help you to follow what people are saying, so that conversation becomes much easier and more relaxed. You will probably find that it is helpful to watch people's faces at the same time.

In noisy places like high streets, pubs and restaurants, you may still find it difficult to follow what people are saying. The digital hearing aids we provide are designed to reduce certain kinds of background noises, such as the rumble of traffic or the whir of a fan. This makes listening more comfortable, but you may still struggle to pick out one voice from the general chatter. Wearing an aid in both ears may help you to focus better on what you want to listen to, please speak to your audiologist if you would like two hearing aids.

How do you know your hearing aid is right for you?

Whichever digital hearing aid you will be issued with, it will be selected and adjusted to give you the best results.

You need to take time to get used to wearing a hearing aid and become accustomed to the sound of it. After 6 weeks, you will normally be given an appointment to discuss how you have been getting on with your hearing aid. If, however, you are not progressing with the aid after a month or so then please contact the Audiology Department. It may be possible to adjust it to suit you better. Your hearing aid should never make sounds uncomfortably loud for you.

Your hearing may seem 'dull' when you take your aid off, but that is just because you have become used to hearing much better with it. Using a hearing aid won't make your hearing worse.

Get used to the hearing aid

If you have not worn an aid before, allow yourself sufficient time to get used to it. Familiarise yourself with your specific model – instructions will be provided at the fitting. Practice inserting and removing your ear piece. This may seem awkward at first, but will become easier with perseverance.

You will hear sounds that you have not heard for perhaps some time; some people find their own voices sound different. You will need time to adjust and learn to recognise these new sounds.

You may wish to gradually build up the time you use your hearing aid possibly starting at home first. Extend the use to more difficult listening situations as your confidence grows. Regular practice and use will give you the best chance of success. Experiment with your aid, even in situations where you feel you hear well – you may be surprised!

Whilst your digital hearing aid offers you the best available technology, programmed to your specific needs, it cannot restore normal hearing.

One hearing aid or two?

Opting for one or two hearing aids depends on your hearing assessment and individual needs. This will be discussed at your assessment and can be reviewed in the future if required.

Some common problems

When you are new to your hearing aid, a number of things can happen to make you think there is something seriously wrong. For example, your aid might suddenly stop working only because the battery is dead. If you think something is wrong with your hearing aid, please see the guide on page 12.

Listening tactics

Even with the best hearing aid, some situations may still be very difficult. Here are a number of things you can do to make it easier to understand what people are saying. Try telling others about your hearing loss and how they can help you to follow what they are saying.

- Ask people to speak clearly, but not to shout;
- be clear about your communication needs from the start. This will make the conversation easier for the other person too;
- face the person speaking and ask them to face you;
- 3-6 feet is the ideal distance from the person speaking. Your hearing aid has only a small microphone, so the closer you are to the sound you are listening to, the better;
- Ensure you can see their expression clearly, try to make sure that the light is falling on their face;
- Don't be afraid to ask people to repeat or rephrase what they said. If you don't, hoping to pick up the sense later, you may lose track of the conversation altogether;
- Make use of what you can see as well as what you can hear. Gestures, facial expression and mouth movements can give you helpful clues to the meaning of what someone is saying;
- If necessary, ask the speaker to slow down and remind them to face you and speak clearly;
- Encourage people to make a point of letting you know when they are introducing a new topic of conversation - and what the subject is;
- It may be helpful to use questions with yes/no answers to confirm information (e.g. 'Did you say 4 o'clock?' rather than 'Did you say 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock?');
- Try to keep calm, and don't panic; and be patient

Your NHS hearing aid

Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids with an ear mould

This is the most common arrangement. The ear mould is custom made to fit in your ear.



Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids with an open fitting

This arrangement is suitable for milder hearing losses. A reasonable degree of dexterity is required to insert the Tube and Tip.



CROS and BiCROS hearing aids are for people with hearing in one ear only. CROS hearing aids feed sound to your good ear from the side with no hearing. This ensures that you do not miss sounds on your 'deaf side'. BiCROS aids are for people who have no useful hearing in one ear and a hearing loss in the other. These aids pick up sounds from both sides, amplify them and feed them into the ear that has some hearing.

Directional microphones: Your hearing aid will have a directional microphone to help you to focus on speech sounds in the presence of background noise. Your hearing aid may have a small push button to allow you to switch between the normal and directional microphones.

Please look at the literature provided with your individual hearing aid for the settings on your hearing aid.

Ear moulds

The ear mould is a vital part of the hearing aid system. It channels sound from the aid into your ear and can affect the quality of what you hear. Sometimes ear moulds can be modified to help you hear better, depending on your hearing loss.

Comfort

An ear mould that doesn't fit well or is difficult to put in place properly will not only be uncomfortable, but will make your hearing aid less effective, and may make it 'whistle'. This happens if amplified sound leaks back out of your ear past the ear mould and gets picked up by the hearing aid microphone. It is technically known as 'acoustic feedback'. Ear moulds should fit snugly but comfortably - even when you are eating! If your ear mould is causing discomfort or if you find it very difficult to put in or keep in place, please book an appointment.

Adding features to your ear mould

You can make a feature of your ear moulds, for example made in bold colours or with glitter. There may be a small charge for this service.

Open fittings

Open fittings can be used instead of an ear mould for some people. It serves the same purpose as an ear mould, channelling the sound into the ear.

The open fitting comprises of two parts. The tube connects to the hearing aid and separate tip attaches to the tube.

The tube and tip need to be kept clean and replaced periodically. This will be explained when the hearing aid is fitted.

Putting in your hearing aid

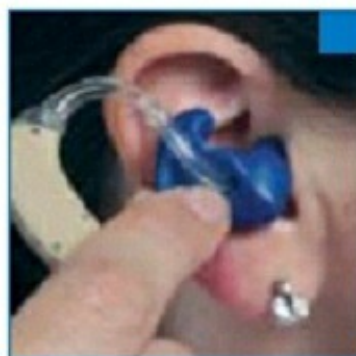
It is important to get the ear mould in your ear properly. Your audiologist should show you how to do this and practice with you in the clinic, but it will take more practice at home before you are an expert.

Hold the ear mould at the back with your finger and thumb.



Pull it back past your ear.

Put the bit that goes down the ear canal into position.



Then insert the bit that goes into the top of the ear



Use your other hand to pull down your ear lobe, if necessary.

Push your ear mould gently in.



Correctly fitted aid



Your method may be different. This does not matter as long as the ear mould and hearing aid are fitting correctly.



This picture shows an ear mould that is not in properly

Top part of the ear mould not properly tucked into the crease at the top of the ear.

This will make your ear sore and may cause feedback (a whistle). Feel up to the top part of your ear. If you can feel the point, the ear mould isn't in properly.

If your ear mould is in properly, but it is still making your ear sore, tell your audiology department (see page 25). They may be able to make the mould more comfortable.

If your ear mould is in properly, but you are still getting feedback, please see the guide on page 20.

To control the hearing aid

Controls

Most hearing aids that this department issues have a volume control and a program selection button. The button allows you to change the way the hearing aid operates for using in different situations, for example using in noisy situations or where there is a loop system. On most aids, moving the volume control downwards will reduce the volume. Refer to the instructions that came with your specific model when practicing with your aid. Your hearing aid will need to be switched off when you are not using it. This is usually done by partially opening the battery compartment.

Your audiologist will show you how to do this.

The Telecoil setting

All of the NHS hearing aids can be programmed with a telecoil setting. When you switch your aid to this setting, it allows you to use special listening equipment, such as an 'induction loop' or a telephone described as 'hearing aid compatible'. If you put your hearing aid on the telecoil setting where there is no loop system present, you may hear a buzzing or humming noise, but you may not hear anything else.

Induction loops

These enable hearing aid users to pick up sound more clearly at a distance or across a counter window by using the telecoil setting. A loop system transfers sound directly to the hearing aid, cutting out most background noise. You will find loops in many theatres, conference halls, booking offices, and at bank counters. You can also have a loop fitted at home, for listening to TV and audio equipment, for example.

Induction loop symbol



Common problems

If the hearing aid doesn't seem to be working:

- check that you have not switched it to the 'Loop' program by accident;
- if your hearing aid has a volume control, check that this is not turned right down. If it is, adjust it to the correct level;
- check that the battery is the right way round;
- try putting in just one new battery;
- take your hearing aid out and check that the earmould is not blocked with wax;
- check that the tubing is not twisted, squashed or split;
- check whether there are droplets of condensation in the tubing. If there are, gently pull the soft tubing off the hooked part of the aid and blow down the tubing to remove the droplets.

If you have checked everything but your hearing aid is still not working, make an appointment to see if it needs to be repaired.

If the hearing aid is whistling, squealing, sizzling or buzzing. This could be 'feedback', which happens when sound from your hearing aid leaks out and gets picked up by its microphone;

- you may not have put the earmould in properly - push it gently to check;
- you may have excess wax in your ears - ask your GP to check your ears;
- if your hearing aid has a volume control, check whether the volume is too high; and/or
- if your aid is buzzing, check whether you have switched to the 'Loop' program by accident.

You may need to ask staff in the Audiology Department for help if:

- your earmould has cracked, or does not fit snugly enough.
- the hooked part of the hearing aid has cracked or
- come loose; and/or
- the tubing has split, and this needs to be replaced

If none of these are the problem, please ring and book an appointment with an Audiologist to see if it needs to be repaired.

Care and maintenance

Please avoid getting your hearing aid wet at any time as this will damage it.

Remove before showering or bathing and before visiting the hairdressers etc.

Batteries

Your audiologist will tell you how to get new batteries. Your hearing aid will use a particular type of battery and this information will be written down in your hearing aid service book. How long they last will depend on what type of hearing aid you have and how much of the time you use it. Most hearing aids beep 4 times once a minute to let you know the battery is getting low.

Don't leave the battery in a hearing aid that you are not using regularly, as it might damage the aid. Keep the batteries clean and dry and away from extreme heat or cold. Dispose of your old batteries at your local recycling centre. Never throw old batteries into a fire (they may explode). Don't leave batteries where small children can reach them. If anyone swallows a battery, it is important to contact their GP. Always carry some spare batteries with you in order not to be caught out if the battery in your hearing aid dies.

Changing the battery

When you change the battery, remember to remove the sticky tab from the fresh one and make sure that it goes in the battery compartment the right way round (match the '+' on the battery with the '+' on the battery compartment). If the battery compartment sticks when you try to close it, don't force it - the battery is probably the wrong way round and you need to check.

Cleaning an ear mould

Ear moulds should be wiped clean every night with a soft, dry cloth or tissue. Don't use any chemicals as these can damage it. Use a pin or similar item to remove any wax or debris that has got into the channel that goes through the earmould.

At least once a week - and preferably more often - the ear mould should be separated from the hearing aid and washed. To do this with a behind-the-ear type of aid, gently pull the soft tubing off the hooked part of the aid by holding on to the tubing and the hook of the aid and tugging gently. But don't pull it out of the ear mould, as you won't

get it back in again. Wash the earmould (with its tubing still in place) in warm, soapy water. Use a nailbrush to remove any wax. Rinse it well, blow down the tubing to get the water out and leave it to dry overnight. Then push the tubing back onto the hearing aid. Make sure that the curve of the earmould goes the same way as the curve of your hearing aid, (see diagram on page 7).

Cleaning a Life tip and tube

The tube should be cleaned using the thin wire you were given when the aid was issued. The tube and tip may be wiped clean using a soft tissue or alcohol wipe such as a Mediwipe, available at chemists.

Cleaning the hearing aid

Clean the hearing aid by wiping it carefully with a soft, dry cloth or tissue. Take care not to get it wet.

Re-tubing the ear mould

You will need to have the tubing changed when it begins to harden and discolors, or if it splits. Please ring and book for an appointment on 01493 452354. The department is open from 9.00 am to 12.30 and 1.30 pm to 4.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

Alternatively, if you feel confident in doing so, we can show you how to replace the tubing yourself.

Local hearing aid services

New batteries

If you bring your brown record book to the main entrance of the hospital we will supply new batteries without the need for an appointment. Batteries are also available at a number of local health centres and hospitals to make it easier for you to get them. There is a list of the local centres available on request. You do not need to go in person. Someone else can get them for you, as long as they have your record book. We also have a postal service; send in your brown service book, and a stamp for return postage.

Repairs

All repairs require an appointment please book with the Audiology Department in the James Paget Hospital. Please ring 01493 452354. The department is open from 9.00 am to 12.30 and 1.30 pm to 4.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

Other assistance

Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a medical term for any noise which people hear either in one ear, both ears or in their head. These sounds do not come from outside the head, although they may occasionally sound as if they do. You may hear a ringing, buzzing, whistling or rushing noise. Tinnitus is quite common and can develop at any age. There are many different causes of it and they are rarely linked to anything serious. Although tinnitus can be distressing if it goes on constantly, people usually learn to minimise its disruptive effects quite successfully. If you have tinnitus and would like help with it, let your GP know. You may find that wearing your hearing aid stops your tinnitus from being so bothersome by bringing in extra sounds that help distract your attention away from it.

Balance

Some people have problems with their balance. We can all feel dizzy at some point in our lives but if you have balance problems or are concerned about your balance, you should talk to your GP and they will advise you as to the best course of action. Many different medical conditions, including inner ear disorders, can give rise to symptoms of dizziness and unsteadiness. These can sometimes be very unpleasant, but the causes are rarely serious. You should always seek medical advice and bear in mind that balance problems can often be helped by simple treatments.

Other equipment

A hearing aid can help you to hear many things in and around the house, but even with its help you may find that you have some remaining problems. If you have difficulty hearing such things as alarm clocks, telephones ringing, doorbells, babies crying, or smoke alarms, for example, you can get alerting devices that have been designed to help. These use flashing lights, pagers or vibrating pads to draw your attention to sounds. If you find it hard to listen to the television or to hear voices on the telephone, other equipment is available to help. The equipment may be available through your social services department or organisation(s) providing services on their behalf, or may be purchased.

Other information

All hearing aids issued by this department are certified as safe for use in mines and other explosive areas. Please ask a member of staff for a copy of the certificate if required.

Helpful organisations

When you are fitted with your hearing aid, your hearing aid centre will give you information about clinic times and local services. Do keep this information in a safe place, as you may need to refer to it in the future.

There are other organisations that provide help and advice for hearing impaired people. We list the main ones below.

Association of Teachers of Lip-reading to Adults (ATLA)

The ATLA can provide information about local lip-reading classes. These details may also be obtainable from your local Audiology Department.

PO Box 506, Hanley

Stoke-on-Trent ST2 9RE.

Fax: 0870 706 2916.

E-mail: ATLA@lipreading.org.uk

Website: www.lipreading.org.uk

British Deaf Association (BDA)

The BDA provides help and support to deaf people, with particular focus on sign-language users. They can provide information on a range of subjects such as welfare benefits, education and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

1-3 Worship Street, London EC2A 2AB

Textphone: 0800 6522 965

Telephone: 0870 770 3300

Videophone: 020 7496 9539

Fax: 020 7588 3527

E-mail: helpline@bda.org.uk

Website: www.britishdeafassociation.org.uk

British Tinnitus Association

This national charity supports local self-help groups and takes an interest in research.

Ground Floor, Unit 5, Acorn Business Park,
Woodseats Close, Sheffield, S8 0TB

Freephone (UK): 0800 018 0527

Fax: 0114 258 2279

E-mail: info@tinnitus.org.uk

Website: www.tinnitus.org.uk

Deafblind UK

Deafblind UK is a national charity which provides a range of support services to deafblind adults and their carers.

The National Centre for Deafblindness

John and Lucille van Geest Place
Cygnet Road, Hampton
Peterborough PE7 8FD

Helpline: 0800 132320 (24 hours)

Textphone: 01733 358858

Fax: 01733 358356

Website: www.deafblind.org.uk

Hearing Concern

Hearing Concern is a national charity dedicated to improving the quality of life of adults who are hard of hearing.

4th floor, 275-281 King Street

London W6 9LZ

Telephone: 020 8233 2929

Textphone: 020 8233 2934

Fax: 020 8233 2934

HelpDesk: 0845 0744600 (voice and text)

E-mail: info@hearingconcern.org.uk

Website: www.hearingconcern.org.uk

National Deaf Children's Society

The NDCS aims to encourage, help and advise parents of deaf children and ensure that deaf children receive the maximum benefits from medical technology and educational techniques.

15 Dufferin Street, London, EC1Y 8UR

Telephone: 020 7490 8656

Textphone: 020 7490 8656

Fax: 020 7251 5020

Freephone helpline: 0808 800 8880

(voice and text)

E-mail: ndcs@ndcs.org.uk

Website: www.ndcs.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss

Action on Hearing Loss is the largest voluntary organisation in the UK concerned with all aspects of deafness. They provide a range of services including freephone helplines, interpreting, training, assistive devices, and residential care. They also provide a range of leaflets on all aspects of deafness which may be available at your hearing aid centre.

19-23 Featherstone Street

London EC1Y 8SL

Freephone Information Line:

Telephone: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

Fax: 020 7296 8199

Website: Action On Hearing Loss: RNID

Tinnitus Helpline:

Telephone: 0808 808 6666 (freephone)

Textphone: 0808 808 0007 (freephone)

Fax: 020 7296 8199

E-mail: tinnitushelpline@rnid.org.uk

Sound Advantage

Sound Advantage is a service for deaf and hard of hearing people. It supplies a full range of assistive devices direct to individuals (via the Solutions catalogue) and through many social services departments. Products include listening devices for TV and general conversation; alerting devices, such as flashing doorbells, smoke detectors and alarm clocks; and special telephones, both textphones and amplified voice phones.

Unit 1, Haddonbrook Business Centre,

Fallodan Road, Orton Southgate,
Peterborough, PE2 6YX

Telephone: 0870 789 8855

Textphone: 01733 238020

Fax: 0870 789 8822

E-mail: solutions@hearingloss.org.uk

Typetalk

Typetalk is a 24-hour telephone relay service that enables deaf, deafblind, deafened, hard of hearing and speech-impaired people to use the normal telephone network to communicate with hearing people anywhere in the world. It is free to join Typetalk, and calls cost about the same as if they had been dialed direct.

For more information about the service, please contact:

RNID Typetalk, PO Box 284

Liverpool L69 3UZ.

Switchboard: 0151 709 9494

Textphone helpline: 0800 500 888

Voice helpline: 0800 7311 888

Fax: 0151 709 8119

E-mail: helpline@rnid-typetalk.org.uk

Website: www.typetalk.org

Sense

Sense is the national voluntary organisation that works with and campaigns for children and adults who are both deaf and blind; providing advice, support, information for them, their families, their carers and the professionals who work with them.

11-13 Clifton Terrace, London N4 3SR

Telephone: 020 7272 7774

Textphone: 020 7272 9648

Fax: 020 7272 6012

E-mail: enquiries@sense.org.uk

Website: www.sense.org.uk

Suffolk Hearing Support Services (SHSS)

SHSS are a voluntary organisation that provides local servicing and support for hearing aid users. This includes regular hearing aid clinics in the Suffolk area.

Suffolk House
2 Wharfedale Road
off Dales Road,
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP1 4JP

Contacts:

Tel: 01473 467785 & 467789

Fax: 01473 467782

Email: enquiries@shss.org.uk

Web: www.shss.org.uk

Norfolk Deaf Association (NDA)

NDA are a voluntary organization that provides local servicing and support for hearing aid users. This includes regular hearing aid clinics in the Norfolk area.

120 Thorpe Road,
Norwich NR1 1RT

You may contact us by post, fax, phone, minicom or email

Tel/Minicom: 01603 404440

Fax: 01603 404433

Email: nda@norfolkdeaf.org.uk

Web: Norfolk Deaf Association