



Using Hearing Aids Successfully

A Ten-Step Educational Program

Enjoying the use of hearing aids– What should you always remember?

People suffering from hearing impairment can learn to use hearing aids in an optimal and fun way. The amount of time required for one to grow accustomed to wearing a hearing aid depends on several factors:

- Age and health
- Degree of hearing impairment
- Duration of hearing impairment
- Person’s willingness to improve their hearing ability

Learning to hear requires patience and exercise as well as reasonable hearing expectations, since your auditory system will need some time before it can offer better hearing with the help of hearing aids. You should also give yourself some time to get used to the idea of using a hearing aid and the presence of a foreign object in your ear.

Now that you are ready to start the auditory acclimatization program, here are ten steps that will assist you in understanding the above title “Enjoying the use of hearing aids” with every step you advance to.

Gradually, you will learn to reap the maximum benefits that hearing aids have to offer, consequently transforming your life for the better.

Acclimatizing to the Use of Hearing Aids

Step One – Start in environments where you can hear easily

Kick off the auditory acclimatization program within family gatherings, for example at your home.

- After reading the hearing aids' user manual and learning how to use your own, put on the hearing aids and start a conversation with one or two people at most.
- During the first few weeks, do not use your hearing aids if you are in noisy places, such as supermarkets, the airport, restaurants or loud parties.

Step Two – Slowly increase the period that you spend wearing the hearing aids

Initially, only wear the hearing aids for a few hours at a time. Then gradually double the amount of time you spend wearing the hearing aids until you reach the point where you are using them throughout the day. This way, it will slowly become a part of your routine. Wearing hearing aids continuously and under different circumstances will build your hearing abilities and show you how to make the most of your hearing aids.

Step Three – Learning to control the volume

- Do not raise the volume too high as that may damage your hearing.
- Do not try to understand low and soft voices from afar. Always remember that even people who hear well cannot distinguish and recognize these kinds of sounds from a distance.
- The more experience you have in using hearing aids, the better you can control the volume level as needed.

Learn How To Monitor Yourself

Step Four – Acclimatizing to Your Hearing Aids

Ideally, hearing aids become a part of you, just like prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses. To get to that point, make sure that the ear mold or hearing aid is placed comfortably inside the ear. If you encounter any problem with that, consult an audiologist.

Allocate resting periods to avoid fatigue.

Using hearing aids and listening to lots of sounds may wear you out initially.

- Allow improvement in your hearing ability to occur gradually.
- Take a break if you feel tired or anxious.
- Be happy with any progress that happens, no matter how small.

Learn to be a social and an active listener.

With the help of your hearing aids, you can now hear better and be more sociable in both quiet and noisy environments. It is necessary to be an effective listener and to always remember that even people with good hearing usually focus on what they want to hear and ignore the rest. To be an effective listener, you should:

- Try to identify the sounds that you previously could not hear when you were in the early stages of using hearing aids.
- Train yourself to focus on the sounds you want to hear and ignore those that are less important.
- Shift your attention from one sound to another when in situations with different sounds.

Get Used to Hearing Your Voice Again

At first, you may be surprised by the quality of your voice! Thanks to the hearing aids, you are now able to hear your voice better. Moreover, you can adjust the loudness of your voice and the way you pronounce words.

- At this stage, it is good to practice reading aloud.

Learning to hear again in difficult situations

Step Five– Living with Noise

The world is a noisy place where people with good hearing can tune out overlapping voices and focus on the sounds that they want to hear. If you have been suffering from hearing impairment for a while, it is possible that you have lost this ability. Hearing aids work on re-introducing you to the many sounds that you may have forgotten; such as the click-clack of heels on the pavement, a truck passing by, dishes clanging, as well as many beautiful sounds like children's laughter, birds chirping, and music. Your goal is to live comfortably with all types of sound. Train by focusing on what you want to hear, and if you have a multi-program hearing aid, then choose the best program.

Step Six– Active participation in social conversations

Even people with good hearing may have difficulty understanding speech when multiple speakers talk simultaneously. Do not worry if you feel flustered when trying to listen to several people; it sometimes helps to get close enough to watch the speaker's lips' movement. Do not try to listen to everyone. Instead, focus on just one speaker at a time. Those with experience using hearing aids perform wonderfully in such situations.

Step Seven– Visiting Public Places

Theaters, places of worship, meeting rooms and other public places may pose a challenge for hearing aid users. It is better to take the seats most ideal for hearing, such as front row seats (though not too close to the speaker), and preferably where you can see the speaker's face.

Many public places have Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) for people who use hearing aids. You can call in advance and inquire about the availability of these services before you go.

Step Eight– Listening to the radio and TV

Electronically-emitted speech may be difficult to understand. By trying to understand the general concept of what is being said, rather than analyzing every word, your ability to listen to the radio and TV using hearing aids improves.

Using special devices that wirelessly connect your hearing aids to the TV by means of Bluetooth technology would transfer the TV sound directly and wirelessly into the hearing aids making the sound clear and comprehensible to a great extent.

Step Nine– Using the phone with your hearing aids

There are many options available for using the phone with your hearing aids, and you can discuss these options with your audiologist to select the most appropriate one.

Using a phone with the hearing aid's microphone:

- If the hearing aid is placed behind the ear, then the microphone is located above the ear.
- If the hearing aid is placed inside the ear, then the microphone is located on the outer ear. If you hear an electronic interference sound, pull back the handset a little from your ear, and you can find out the most optimal and comfortable position of the handset on the hearing aid by trying different positions and determining the one that gives the clearest sound quality without squealing.

Assistive Listening Devices for cellphones and landline phones

There are special devices that wirelessly connect your hearing aids to the cellphone or landline phone by means of Bluetooth technology, transferring the speaker's voice directly and wirelessly into the hearing aids making the voice clear and comprehensible to a great extent.

Step Ten– Two Hearing Aids Are Better Than One

For those suffering from poor hearing in both ears, using two hearing aids has several benefits. Typically, hearing aid users enjoy enhanced hearing when using two hearing aids simultaneously. The benefits of this include:

- More natural hearing, since our auditory system is designed to receive sounds from both ears.
- Better ability to determine the source of a sound; for example, knowing in which direction to look when hearing an approaching truck.
- Improved ability to distinguish speech in crowded places.
- Filtered sound tones.
- Picking up sounds binaurally is less stressful and more enjoyable.
- Lower volume of sound required.

Care and Maintenance of Hearing Aids

Hearing aids are designed with precision and durability. However, they do not endure rough treatment. Always handle your hearing aids gently. Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Protection from bumps: Place the hearing aids over a soft surface like a bed or couch.
2. Protection from heat: Do not subject the hearing aids to high temperatures and keep them away from direct sunlight (whether at home or in the car) and radiators.
3. Protection from moisture: Remove the hearing aids before showering, bathing or ablution; they must remain dry at all times. In humid weather, leave the battery compartment open during the night. Wipe them using a dry, soft cloth. In cases of sweating, continuously wipe the area around and behind the ear. (An audiologist would have suitable material for this purpose).
4. Keep hearing aids out of reach of children and pets.
5. Watch out for hairspray: Keep the hearing aids away from products such as hairspray and oils, and take them out completely when cutting your hair.
6. Clean them gently: Only use a dry, soft cloth to clean hearing aids. Do not use alcohol or any other solvent to clean them.
7. Ear cleanliness: Keep your ear clean. Keep your hearing aid, ear mold and behind-the-ear hearing aid tube clean of wax and other impurities at all times. There are specialized cleaning products available from audiologists, who can also make sure that there is no wax buildup in the hearing aid as well as check its overall condition.
8. Only allow a specialist to repair the hearing aids; tampering with electronics or precise devices may cause a malfunction that cannot be repaired. With regard to In-The-Canal hearing aid, and since its electronics are located inside its shell that is placed inside the ear canal, this makes it prone to malfunction due to earwax, moisture and other impurities.

Final Recommendation

Your successful use of hearing aids in the early days can put you on the road toward optimal hearing throughout your life. We have prepared this document to help you during this critical first phase because we not only want you to hear, but to receive the best return on your

investment. We recommend that you use these instructions alongside the valuable advice of an experienced audiologist.