

## **Introduction to your hearing aid(s)**

We hope you are happy with your new hearing aid(s). This leaflet contains a lot of useful information which will help you to get used to your hearing aid(s).

### **Getting used to the hearing aid(s)**

The following are common things you may notice when first wearing your hearing aid(s):

#### **My own voice sounds strange**

Your own voice does sound different through hearing aids because you are hearing it through external microphones in the aids. It should, though, be tolerable and you will find that the more you wear the hearing aids the less strange it sounds.

You may experience an echo sensation of your own voice. This is partly because you are hearing sounds in your voice which you have not heard for some time, and partly because you have a physical object in your ear. This should settle down within a few weeks, but if after this time it does not, or the sound of your own voice is making it impossible to wear the aids, then please contact us to make an appointment to see an Audiologist.

#### **It sounds tinny**

Hearing loss often affects our hearing of high-pitched/treble sounds, so hearing aids often amplify these sounds more than anything else. Although these high pitches can sound tinny initially, they will improve the clarity of speech and appear less harsh over time.

#### **Background or incidental sounds are loud**

You will be able to hear lots of incidental, background sounds that you may not have heard for a long time, and your brain will initially be very aware of these sounds. The more you wear your hearing aid(s) and expose your brain to these sounds, they will be less noticeable. A person with hearing in the normal range will also hear these sounds, but their brain is able to ignore them as they hear them every day – your brain will learn to do this again over time.

#### **My hearing aids are uncomfortable**

The first thing to check is that you have put them in your ears correctly – you can check this by referring to the photographs and/or videos on our website.

You can also give your ears a rest, you may well find that starting with a few hours at a time and building up gradually can give your ears a chance to get use to having something in them.

## **Acclimatising to your hearing aid(s)**

Acclimatisation is the process by which your brain gets used to the sound of your hearing aid(s), and can take up to 12 weeks. The more you expose your brain to hearing with your hearing aid(s) the quicker you will get used to them.

You need to remember that hearing aids are not like glasses – you will not suddenly start hearing again the way you used to. They are not an instant fix, and do take some perseverance to get the best from them.

Sounds like the kettle boiling, the toilet flushing, the fridge humming and paper rustling may sound very loud initially. Your brain may not have heard these sounds at this level for a long time, and will need to re-learn what's important and what's not, before being able to ignore these sorts of sounds.

Like any other learning, this task will require some commitment. You can start wearing your aid(s) all day from the start, but this is not always easy, so you can build up the use of your hearing aid(s) gradually, both in the hours per day and the noisiness of the situations. On the first day, wear it for at least an hour in a quiet situation, for example, at home. Gradually increase the length of time you wear your aid(s) each day until you are wearing it all the time at home and in quiet situations. Then, begin to wear it in noisier situations - the following page has some tips to help you through this process.

You will gain the most benefit from your hearing aids when you are wearing them all day, and with perseverance you will build up use until you are able to insert your aids in the morning and leave them in until you go to bed at night. They should be comfortable enough to wear all day, but if they are not then please make sure you are inserting the moulds correctly by referring to the "Earmould insertion" sheet enclosed.

**It is likely to take patience and perseverance on your part when getting used to hearing aids.** If you stop wearing your aid(s) regularly it is likely to seem strange when you put them in again.

**So don't give up, stay positive and try to persevere. Once you adjust to the sound of your hearing aid(s) you will receive the full benefit of them, and manage better in group conversations and background noise.**

It is also worth bearing in mind that, even though you may have some ways to adjust your hearing aids, you should be careful with these while getting used to them. It is better to try only changing one thing at a time to see if it helps (eg. changing the volume), rather than making lots of changes at once.

## **One STEP at a Time - Situations To Experience and Practice**

You will get the most out of your new hearing aids if you practice using them in certain situations *around the home* before you progress to situations that are more difficult. If these sounds strange for the first time don't be discouraged - your brain has the ability to re-learn with repeated experiences.

Try to wear your hearing aids in the following situations in roughly the order shown:

1. Listening to one other person at home while you can see his/her face
2. Listening to a TV or radio at home
3. Walking around inside your home, trying to recognise any sounds you can hear
4. Listening to one other person at home while you are not looking at their face
5. Listening to music
6. Listening to your own voice while you read aloud from a newspaper or book
7. Conversing with 2/3 people in a quiet place
8. Walking around outside, trying to recognise any sounds you can hear
9. Shopping or talking to another person in a noisy place
10. Conversing with 2/3 people in a noisy place
11. Conversing in a large gathering or at a noisy restaurant

## **Hearing aids have both benefits and limitations**

Your hearing aids aim to improve your ability to hear speech and everyday sounds.

Your hearing aids will not give you perfect hearing; they are helping you to make the most of the hearing you have.

*Remember to be realistic about what your hearing aid(s) can do.*

There may still be some situations where you may have difficulty such as in noisy/crowded places. This situation is also difficult for people with normal hearing as background sounds can overpower speech.

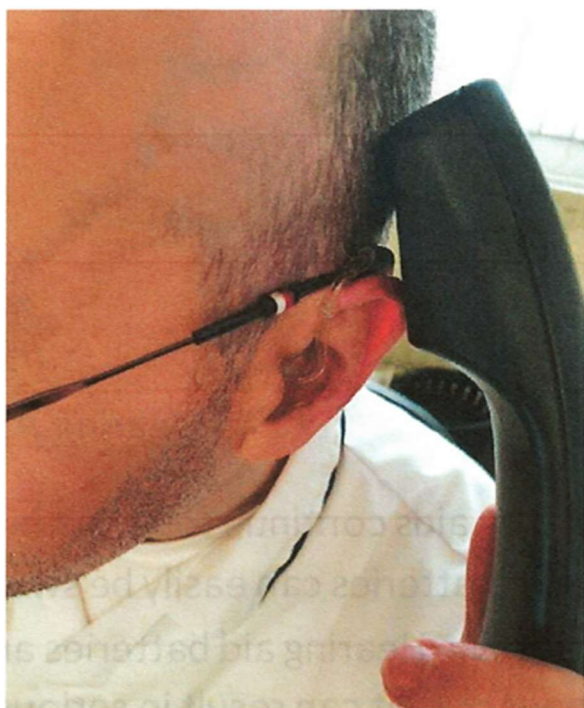
Consider where you are seated when in these situations. Try to keep background noise *behind* you and whoever you wish to hear *in front* of you. This is because the hearing aid is most sensitive to what is in front and least sensitive to what is behind.

If, after a period of acclimatization, you feel the hearing aids are not benefiting you, please contact us and make an appointment to see an Audiologist.

### **Using your hearing aid(s) on the Telephone**

Leave your hearing aid in place on the setting that you would use to pick up ordinary everyday sounds.

Rather than holding the telephone to the opening of your ear, you might find it more beneficial to hold it close to the top of your hearing aid, as this is where the microphones are. Please see the below pictures to help you.



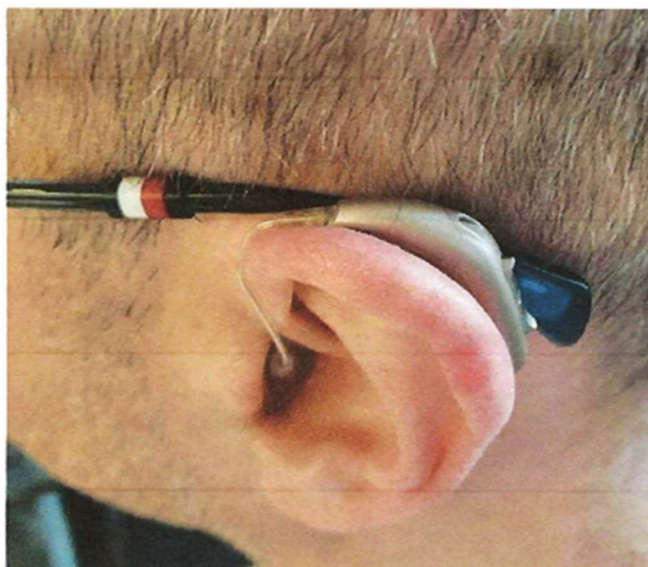
If you are experiencing feedback (whistling) while using the phone, you may be holding the phone too close to the hearing aid.

You will need to experiment to find a position that suits you best. If possible, get a family member or friend to ring you so you have time to experiment and practice.

An alternative is to use the speaker phone on the telephone so that the sound comes into both hearing aids together.

### **Wearing Glasses with your hearing aid(s)**

Many thousands of people across the UK successfully wear hearing aids and glasses together. We recommend you put your hearing aid(s) on first. Then slide your glasses on closest to your head so that the arms of your glasses sit between your head and your hearing aid. Do not stretch the glasses to the outside of the hearing aid as this may damage your glasses and block the hearing aid microphones.



If you are having difficulty sitting your hearing aid(s) alongside your glasses, please contact us and we can help you. We may make an appointment to check the fitting. A simple adjustment to the tubing may be all that is required. You may also be advised to visit your optician to ensure that your glasses frames have not stretched over time and are sitting properly against your head.

### **Hearing aid maintenance**

If you have earmoulds, the tubing connecting these to your hearing aids needs to be changed about every six months, or when it starts going hard. You can do this yourself by following the video on our website, or call the Department to arrange for a repair appointment. We can post spare tubing on request. We also have a volunteer service which runs in some of our community Hospitals, and they can change tubing for you – details are on our website.

If your hearing aids have slimtubes and domes, we can post these out to you. Normally you would replace the domes about every two-three months, and the slimtubes themselves about every six months.

## **Hearing Aid Battery Safety**

As hearing aids continue to shrink in size, their batteries have also. Small "button" batteries can easily be swallowed by children or pets, or even adults accidentally. Hearing aid batteries are made up of various metals and chemical compounds that can result in serious and sometimes life-threatening injuries if swallowed.

### **Safety Tips**

- Keep hearing aids and batteries out of reach and out of sight, especially of children. Never let a child play with a hearing aid or its battery

If required, we can put locks on hearing aids where the battery is kept. Be sure these are in the "lock" position when the person wears the hearing aids. If you think a battery door lock is required, please contact us

- When you handle batteries, work over a towel. If you drop the hearing aid battery, it will be easier to find and to retrieve. If you drop it onto a hard surface, the battery is likely to bounce and end up on your floor. A child may find it
- Never put your hearing aids or its batteries on a table where you put food or drinks. If you or a child are distracted and not paying attention, it can easily be picked up accidentally
- If you store batteries in your purse, keep them separate from any other medication you may carry
- Dispose of used batteries immediately. Flat batteries can still be dangerous
- If you suspect a person or a pet has swallowed a hearing aid battery it is imperative that you act immediately and attend your nearest A&E department or vet, in the case of a pet. Do not eat or drink if battery ingestion is suspected
- Tell others about the risk associated with button batteries and how to keep them safely stored

**Your hearing aids remain the property of the NHS, should they not be required please return them to the local audiology services. There may also be a charge of £100 per aid for lost or damaged aids.**

If you have any problems with your new hearing aids that are not addressed in your fitting pack please contact us on:

01225 824035  
ruh-tr.audiology@nhs.net