

Hearing Aids A Guide to Hearing Aids

Use your hearing aid for at least three to four hours every day. This will help you become familiar with the controls of the hearing aid and help you adapt to aid use more quickly.

1. Use the aid at home at first. Try conversation with only one person and make sure to watch the speaker.
2. Next try a small group conversation with two or three people. Do not try to hear all of the group conversation; just pay attention to each speaker. Listen to music or watch television. Try to increase the length of time each day that you use your hearing aid.
3. Now try the aid during short social or business occasions. If you plan to attend a meeting, you may be able to obtain a copy of the agenda first - it helps to know what is going to be discussed.
4. Listen to short radio speeches or programs such as the news. If you still have difficulties hearing the TV and radio after several weeks, talk to the audiologist about assistive listening devices that may help.
5. Attend church or a lecture. Try sitting in the centre aisle a few rows from the front. If there is a PA system installed, try sitting with the aided ear within 2-3 metres of the PA speaker. If your hearing aid has a 'T' switch, ask if an induction "audio loop system" is in place and working.
6. Attend the cinema or theatre. Some theatres and cinemas have devices that might assist you. The State Theatre and Concert Hall have infrared listening systems: ask about this or an audio loop system when you book your tickets. Discuss the use of your 'T' switch with your audiologist.

Do not put up with a sound quality from your hearing aid that seems fuzzy, distorted or uncomfortably harsh. Talk to your audiologist about this.

Hearing Aid Care

The Hearing Aid

- Hearing aids should never be worn whilst sleeping or if an ear infection is present.
- Keep your aid in a cool dry place.

For the First Few Weeks...

- High temperatures can damage your hearing aid. Do not place it near appliances such as radiators or hair dryers or leave it in the sun.
- Never get your aid wet. It must be removed before taking a bath or shower. If it does get wet contact your audiologist.
- Remove your aid before using hair spray
Store your hearing aid in an open box to let any accumulated moisture evaporate.

Batteries

- Make sure you buy fresh batteries that are the right size and type for your hearing aid. Keep them in a cool dry place.
- Insert the battery correctly. Match the + on the battery with the + on the aid.
- Throw out used batteries, but do not burn them, as they may explode. Make sure that you recycle. Hearing aid dealers should have a proper disposal unit on site so keep your used batteries and dispose of them responsibly.
- People who have obtained their hearing aid through the Commonwealth Government's Hearing Services Program can obtain free batteries on payment of a small annual fee. Contact the place that fitted your hearing aid for this service.
- Batteries do go stale after about six months. When purchasing batteries, make sure you buy them from somewhere that has a quick turnover. Try hearing aid dealers, chemists or electronics stores.

Ear Moulds (For all types of hearing aids)

- Always check that the earmould has been inserted correctly.
- Earmoulds should not be painful or uncomfortable to wear and should be adjusted by the audiologist if this is the case.
- Clean the earmould by wiping it each day with a tissue, damp cloth or special hearing aid cleaning solution.

- If the earmould becomes blocked with wax, it will stop the passage of sound into the ear canal. This wax can be removed with a wax hook, available from an audiologist. The internal mechanism of the in-the-ear or in-the-canal hearing aids can be damaged if the wax hook is inserted too far into the aid.

Behind-the-Ear hearing aids

- The earmoulds for behind-the-ear hearing aids need to be replaced if shrinkage or splitting is noticed, as this may cause the hearing aid to whistle and will be uncomfortable for the user. This occurs more often with "soft type" earmoulds and these may need to be replaced every one or two years.
- The hearing aid may whistle if the earmould tubing becomes loose, cracked or damaged. This tubing can be replaced by the audiologist.
- Earmoulds for behind-the-ear hearing aids can be removed from the aid for cleaning where the tubing joins the friction hook. The earmould can be washed in warm water using mild soap or special earmould cleaning solution. It must be dried thoroughly before it is replaced. An earmould puffer can be purchased from an audiologist for this purpose.

Receiver-in-the-ear hearing aids

- Receiver-in-the-ear (RITE) hearing aids look similar to behind-the-ear hearing aids. On RITE hearing aids the mould CANNOT be removed from the aid.
- If any of the openings of the ear mould is blocked with wax, the sound won't go through. Make sure all the openings are free from wax and that you replace your wax protection system as often as needed.

Useful Extras for Hearing Aid Care

Battery Tester

Battery testers are used to test the life of batteries. There are various types available to test batteries of different sizes. If you use zinc-air batteries, make sure the battery tester is appropriate for this type of battery.

A Wax Hook

A wax hook is a useful tool for removing wax from your ear mould and is available from your audiologist.

Ear Mould Puffer*

This is useful for removing moisture from the ear mould. Separate the mould from the aid before puffing out moisture.

*For behind-the-ear hearing aids only

Aid Cleaning Solution

This is useful for cleaning wax from earmoulds.

Bags of Silica Gel Beads

These can be placed in a closed container with the hearing aid, to absorb moisture from the aid and tubing.

Hearing Aid Checklist

If the hearing aid:

Sounds weak: Try a fresh battery. Turn the volume up. Check if there is wax or moisture in the tubing or it is bent.

Goes on and off: Check for corrosion on the battery (this will appear as a white powder). Work the switch back and forth; dust in the switch may interfere with the contacts. Check for wax or moisture in the tubing.

Whistles: Check that the mould is inserted correctly. Check the earmould tubing for cracks. Ask your doctor to check your ear for wax. Check for wax in the earmould. Check that the earmould fits well. Ear shape can alter, earmoulds can shrink. These factors can cause the aid to whistle and the mould may need to be replaced. Please consult your audiologist if the aid continues to whistle.

Is Dead: Try a fresh battery. Check that the battery is in correctly. Check that the + on the battery corresponds to the + on the aid. Check that the aid is on the right setting, not the 'T'. Check that the earmould output hole is not blocked with wax. If you have checked the above and the aid is still not working, contact your audiologist as it may have an internal fault.

These articles are available from your audiologist or hearing aid dealer.

Vicdeaf regularly updates our fact sheets. To ensure that your information is current, or for further information about Vicdeaf and the services offered, please visit our website or contact us.

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Victorian Deaf Society

Level 4, 340 Albert Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

P (03) 9473 1111 **tty** (03) 9473 1199 **f** (03) 9473 1122 **e** info@vicdeaf.com.au **w** www.vicdeaf.com.au

ABN 56 004 058 084