

How to get the best from your hearing aid

Information for patients and relatives

Introduction

We hope you are happy with your new hearing aid(s). At the fitting appointment your Audiologist will have instructed you on how to use, care for and get used to your hearing aid. This booklet aims to refresh and build on the information covered during your hearing aid fitting.

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.

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 if it is lost or damaged through misuse.

Getting used to the hearing aid

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

My own voice sounds strange - your ear is now blocked with your earpiece. This creates an occlusion which can make your voice sound hollow, like an echo. As you get used to your hearing aid, this effect should gradually fade.

It sounds tinny – Hearing loss often affects our hearing of high-pitched sounds. Therefore hearing aids often amplify high- pitched sounds more so than anything else. Although these high pitches can sound tinny initially they will improve the clarity of speech.

Background sounds are loud - You will be able to hear lots of background sounds that you may not have heard for a long time. Your brain will initially be very aware of these sounds. The more you wear your hearing aid and expose your brain to these sounds, it will be less noticeable.

A person with normal hearing will also hear these sounds but their brain is able to ignore them as they hear them every day. Providing you wear your hearing aid regularly, you will get used to background sounds and pay less attention to them.

Acclimatisation

Acclimatisation is the process in which your brain gets used to the sound of your hearing aid. The more you expose your brain to hearing with your hearing aid the quicker you will get used to it. 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. It will need to re-learn what's important and what's not before being able to ignore these sorts of sounds.

You can build up the use of your hearing aid gradually. 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 each day and begin to wear it in noisier situations. Eventually you will build up use until you are able to put your hearing aid in in the morning and leave it in until you go to bed at night.

You will gain the most benefit from your hearing aid when you are wearing it all day.

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

So don't give up, stay positive and try to persevere. Once you adjust to the sound of your hearing aid you will receive the full benefit of it.

Hearing aids have both benefits and limitations

Your hearing aid aims to help improve your understanding of speech and your ability to hear everyday sounds. Your hearing aid will not give you perfect hearing; it is purely an aid helping you to make the most of the hearing you have.

Remember to be realistic about what your hearing aid can do. There may still be some situations where you have difficulty such as in noisy/crowded places. This situation is also difficult for people with normal hearing as background sounds will overpower speech. Make use of communication strategies, as discussed on the next page.

Communication Tactics

Help Yourself

- Be Open** Tell people about your hearing loss. Ask them to get your attention before speaking.
- Be Observant** Watch for facial expressions, lip patterns and hand gestures. These all give clues to the conversation.
- Be Positive** Don't be afraid to ask the speaker to repeat themselves.

Hints and tips for friends and family

<p>Minimise background noise</p> 	<p>Attract attention before speaking</p> 
<p>Speak clearly and not too fast</p> 	<p>Face the person, be sure your mouth is visible</p> 
<p>Get to the point. Make sure the topic of conversation is clear</p> 	<p>Include people. Tell them what you are talking about or laughing about</p> 
<p>Speak one at a time</p> 	<p>Be patient</p> 
<p>Repeat, rephrase, or write it down</p> 	<p>Remember, communication is a two way responsibility</p> 

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The Environment

Lighting

Make sure the speakers face is well lit.

Furnishings

Soft furnishings reduce echo, for example using table cloths and mats can reduce cutlery/crockery noise.

Position

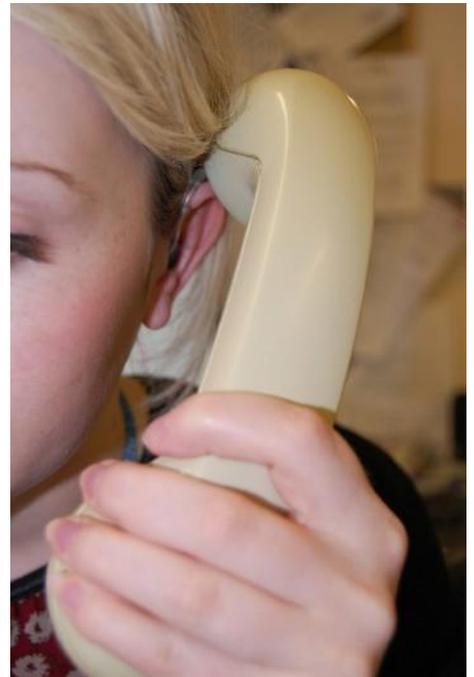
Always try to minimise background noise;

- Sit with your back to a wall in a noisy restaurant,
- Turn off radio/television
- The ideal distance is 3-6 feet. Your hearing aid only has a small microphone, so the closer you are to the sound you are listening to, the better.

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 will need to hold it close to the top of your hearing aid, where the microphones are located (as shown in the picture).

If you are experiencing feedback, 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.



If you continue to struggle to hear on the phone despite following this advice you may benefit from using a hands-free, or loudspeaker function on your telephone.

Alternately you can get further advice from your Audiologist.

Please contact us to arrange an appointment on:

Telephone: (01925) 662420

Email: whh.audiology@nhs.net

Your hearing aid set up

Your hearing aid will either have an ear mould or a thin tube delivering sound into your ear. This is determined by the level and type of your hearing loss and by your manual dexterity.



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.



Your Audiologist will have set your hearing aid to suit your hearing loss and your hearing needs. Sometimes hearing aids are set to be completely automatic and sometimes they are set with different programmes and/or volume control which you can change yourself.

You will have been provided with an instruction booklet from your hearing aid manufacturer. Please refer to this for more detailed information on how to use these controls. Hearing aids are often set as automatic to begin with. If you would like to have controls added to your hearing aid, please tell your Audiologist.

Loop System

Loop systems are found in public places including the bank, post office, church, theatre and cinema. They are designed to help you hear the speaker more clearly. It transfers sound directly to the hearing aid, cutting out most background noise.

Please check with the Audiologist whether your hearing aid is compatible with the loop system.



Putting your hearing aid on (with an ear mould)

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 index finger and thumb, as shown in the picture.

Pull it back past your ear.

Generally the right hand should be used to insert a right hearing aid and the left hand to insert a left hearing aid.



Insert the bottom process into your ear canal and the top process under the fold of skin located above.



Push the part of the mould you have been holding into your ear, as shown in the picture.

It may help to use your other hand to gently pull down on your ear lobe.



Tuck the hearing aid behind your ear to achieve a correctly fitted ear mould and hearing aid.

Putting your hearing aid on (with a thin tube)



Start by placing your hearing aid behind your ear.



Get a hold of the bend of the tube and hold it between your thumb and index finger.



You will be directing the dome of the hearing aid towards the ear canal.

Gently push the dome into the ear canal until the tube of the hearing aid sits close to the side of your head.

If the tube is not sitting close to your head you have not pushed the dome in far enough.



Finally, if your tube has an ear grip attached, you will need to push the ear grip into the bowl of your ear.

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.

Each hearing aid battery should last between 7 and 10 days (depending on how often it is used). You will have been provided with a full packet of batteries at your hearing aid fitting.

Batteries are currently free of charge and can be collected on presentation of your brown battery book at the Audiology reception in Warrington Hospital and at the General Office in Halton Hospital.

<p>NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE HEARING AID AND BATTERY ISSUING RECORD BOOK</p> <p>This record book must be produced when new batteries are required or when servicing to your hearing aid is necessary.</p> <p>IF FOUND PLEASE RETURN TO:</p> <p>Patients Name & Address</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Your hearing aid is valuable National Health Service (NHS) property. Please take care of it. If for any reason the aid is no longer required, it should be returned together with this book as soon as possible to the NHS hearing aid centre shown overleaf or to an alternative NHS hearing and centre which is near you.</p>
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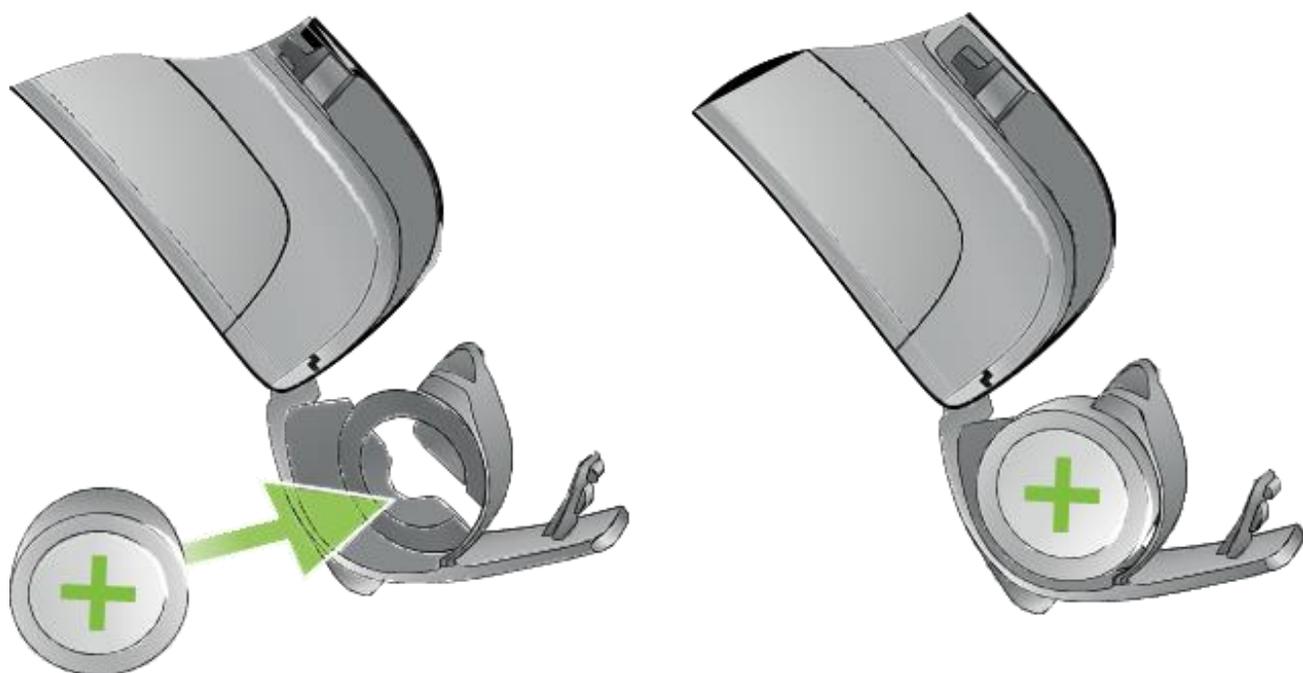
Batteries are also available at a number of local health centres and GP Practices, to make it easier for you to collect them. There is a list of the local centres available on request.

You do not need to go in person. Someone else can collect them for you, as long as they have your record book. We also have a postal service for batteries; send in your brown service book to the Audiology Department at Warrington hospital, and enclose stamps for return post.

Changing the batteries

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.



If the battery is inserted the wrong way up, the hearing aid will not work and may become damaged.



Ear mould

Daily Care

Your ear mould must be kept clean to avoid wax build up. Wipe the ear mould with a damp cloth or wet wipe on a daily basis. Check for any blockages in the tubing.



Pull the soft tube gently away from the harder plastic hook of your hearing aid.



Wash the mould and soft tube in warm soapy water.



Rinse the mould and soft tube thoroughly



Re-attach the soft tube to the hearing aid, making sure it is completely dry before you do so. We recommend that you wash your mould before going to bed and leave it in a safe place to dry overnight.

Thin tubes

To clean your thin tube, wipe the dome with a wet wipe or wet flannel. If you think there may be a blockage in the tube, thread your cleaning wire through the tube.



Servicing of Hearing Aids (not repairs)

The tube on your hearing aid will become hard and brittle over time. It will need to be replaced every 4 - 6 months. This can be done by your Audiologist.

It is important to have your hearing aid re-tubed regularly as it will improve the sound quality and prevent the tube from snapping/ breaking.

There is no appointment necessary for this, which is available at the following locations:

Warrington Hospital Audiology Outpatients

Monday – Friday
9am – 4pm

Halton General Hospital Hearing Aid Clinic C

Wednesday
9am – 12pm

Grappenhall Clinic

Springfield Avenue, WA4 2NW

First Tuesday of the month
9am – 11:30am
Second Wednesday of the month
1.30pm – 4pm

Orford Jubilee Park Honiton Way, WA5 2EY

Last Friday of the month
9am – 11:30am

Woolston Clinic Holes Lane, WA1 4LS

Last Tuesday of the month
9am – 11:30am

Penketh Clinic

Honiton Way, WA5 2EY

First Friday of the month
9am – 11:30am
Third Wednesday of the month
1.30pm – 4pm

Please ensure you bring your brown record book with you.

Repairs

Complex repairs or hearing aid adjustments would still require an appointment to be booked at the main Hospital Department, either at Warrington Hospital, Halton Hospital and Highfield Hospital.

If you would like to know more, please contact us on:

 01925662420

 whh.audiology@nhs.net

Assistive Listening Devices or Other equipment

A hearing aid can help you to hear many things in and around the house, but even then you may find that you have some remaining problems.

If you have difficulty hearing things such as: alarm clocks, telephones ringing, doorbells, babies crying, or smoke alarms, 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.

**If you would like to know more,
Please contact us on:**



01925662420



whh.audiology@nhs.net

Common questions

Q Can I wear my hearing aid on a plane?

A It is perfectly safe to wear hearing aids (which do not use wireless technology) on a plane. If you have wireless hearing aids please refer to the instructions in your manufacturer's instruction booklet for switching your hearing aid to flight mode. If you are not sure if your hearing aids are wireless or not please ask your Audiologist.

Q Are there any places I shouldn't wear my hearing aid?

A Take your hearing aid out when having a bath/ shower or anywhere it is likely to get wet. We also recommend you take your hearing aid out to go to bed.

Q Can I wear my hearing aid in the hairdressers?

A Yes, but take it out if you think it will get wet or covered in hairspray/product.

Q Will wearing a hearing aid make my hearing worse when I take it out?

A No your hearing aid should never make your natural hearing any worse. If you find your natural hearing appears dull when you take your hearing aid out, it is only because you have become used to hearing better when it's in.

Q I only have one hearing aid, should I have two?

A This will mainly depend on your hearing levels in each ear. If you have a hearing loss in both ears wearing two hearing aids can offer many benefits. You need to be willing to wear the two hearing aids as a pair every day. A number of our patients will begin with one hearing aid to assess its benefit. If you wear your hearing aid regularly, have an aid-able hearing loss in your other ear and feel you require a second hearing aid please speak to your Audiologist.

Troubleshooting

Problem	Possible Cause	Action
No Sound	Aid not turned on Battery not inserted correctly Dead battery, blocked ear mould Condensation in tube	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn aid on.• Insert battery correctly.• Replace battery.• Check and follow advice for cleaning.• Check tubing & blow out.
Whistling or buzzing when in ear	Mould not inserted correctly Excess wax in your ear Damaged tubing Aid is on loop program Cracked/Loose earmould	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take mould out and insert carefully.• Have your practice nurse check and remove any wax if necessary.• Replace tubing.• Turn off and back on to reset.• Attend repair clinic.
Unknown		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange appointment

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Find out more about Warrington and Halton Hospitals and the services we provide at:

www.whh.nhs.uk