

Patient Information

Getting Used to Your Hearing Aids

INTRODUCTION

Obtaining hearing aids has taken you a long way toward improving your hearing and your life. But to adapt successfully to the new sounds you hear, and to obtain the maximum benefit possible from your new hearing aids, you will need a little time. To help you in your adjustment you may wish to follow these guidelines.

START OUT SLOWLY

While some people can put on hearing aids for the first time and wear them all day in any environment, most cannot. It may be advantageous to begin use in your own home where you have more control over the variety of sounds you will hear and their intensities. Use your comfort level as a guide. If after several hours you want to take off your hearing aids then you should. Allow your ears (and your brain) to rest and then put them on again later.

YOU CAN LIVE WITH BACKGROUND SOUNDS

Your new hearing aids will amplify all of the sounds of your life, not just speech. When your hearing was normal, all the extra noises you could hear were placed into your background so that they did not distract you. Until you become accustomed to the sounds of life again you will have difficulty “tuning them out”. Listen for the background sounds in your life and learn to recognise them.

ENLIST THE ASSISTANCE OF A LEARNING PARTNER

You may find it helpful to begin listening with your new hearing aids by conversing about familiar topics with only one person (spouse, neighbour or friend) in the absence of any other distracting sounds. After a day or two you may want to introduce some background noise from the television or a radio. It may be helpful as you become accustomed to your hearing aids to listen to your learning partner read aloud from a newspaper or magazine while you read along silently.

PRACTISE SPEECH-SOUND DISCRIMINATION

Prepare a list of words that may differ by a single sound (for example – fish/dish, mop/top, bike/bite etc.) While your learning partner clearly pronounces the pairs of words watch the lip movements and become familiar with the visual aspects of sound discrimination. Then repeat the task without watching and concentrate on the subtle sound differences between the word pairs. Keep in mind that some speech sounds are identical for the lips (for example – pan/man, bat/mat, sett/tell) Also keep in mind that auditory discrimination with

impaired ear can be difficult and you may not be able to make some sound distinctions. But with practise you will improve

GRADUALLY EXTEND YOUR HORIZONS

As you become more experienced with your hearing aids, gradually expand the diversity of listening environments and the variety of people with whom you communicate. You will find that some situations and some voices are easier for you. Certainly listening within groups will be more difficult than one-on-one conversations. When listening in groups, concentrate primarily on the person who is talking the most. You may miss an occasional word or phrase. This is normal in any conversation. Try not to get “hung up” on single words but listen for the idea behind what is being said. And always watch the speaker’s face. Even without formal training in lip reading understanding improves significantly when you have a clear view of the face. Try giving yourself a time limit of maybe 2-3 weeks of increasing wearing your hearing aid until you are wearing it for the majority of the day.

DO NOT BECOME DISCOURAGED

Remember, you did not lose your hearing overnight. Nor will you become fully adapted to your new hearing aids right away. But by practising these suggestions and using some communication tactics you will continue to improve.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

You will find that hearing aids may not help in every situation. If you find you continue to have problems hearing the phone ring, hearing the smoke alarm, hearing in the car, hearing at the theatre or cinema, at religious services or similar settings, discuss this with your audiologist. There are devices designed specifically for a variety of difficult areas. Talk with your audiologist for further information.

Modified from: Clark, J.G., & English, K.M.,2004. Counselling in Audiologic Practice, Appendix 6.



If you require this leaflet in LARGE PRINT, please ask your audiologist, a member of reception, or contact the department

This Information leaflet has been reviewed and approved by the Audiology Patient Panel. If you would like to get involved, please leave your contact details with a member of the reception staff.

Document History

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Contact number: 01480 847465

Publish/Review date: May 2013/ May 2021