

# Making the Most of Your New Hearing Aids

Congratulations on your new hearing aids! You may have a lot of questions. Listening with hearing aids is different, and it may take some time to get used to new sounds. Hearing aids may greatly improve your day-to-day listening; for instance, hear your loved ones better, improve your ability to communicate on the telephone, and lower the volume on the television or radio. Here are some tips on how to use your new hearing aids and get the most out of them.

## On the day you pick up your hearing aids, your audiologist will:

- Check that your hearing aids fit comfortably
- Show you how to put on and take off your hearing aids
- Teach you how to insert and remove the batteries or how to recharge the hearing aids if they have rechargeable batteries
- Verify the programs and settings of your hearing aids. A method called real-ear measurement (REM) is considered the “gold standard” to ensure that the hearing aids are amplifying sounds at the appropriate level for your hearing loss. REM may be performed either at your initial hearing aid fitting or at a follow-up appointment.
- Teach you how to clean and care for your hearing aids
- Discuss hearing assistive technology (such as remote controls, television accessories or portable microphones) that may further help you
- Schedule you for a follow-up visit

## Getting started

It can take time to adjust to hearing aids. Here are some tips.

- Wear your hearing aids daily during most waking hours (remove when bathing to avoid getting them wet).
- Wear your hearing aids even if you are alone and/or in quiet environments. You will be reteaching your brain to hear and listen to sounds that you have been missing.
- Wear your hearing aids in noisy places to assist with communication. New hearing aid technology has digital processing that helps to reduce background noise to a more comfortable level.
- Contact your audiologist right away if
  - you get whistling or feedback from your hearing aids or
  - you experience pain when wearing your hearing aids.

## Battery basics

Hearing aids require batteries to keep them working. Traditionally, hearing aids used small, disposable batteries. Some of the newer hearing aids are rechargeable and use lithium-ion batteries that are sealed inside the hearing aids. Hearing aids with rechargeable batteries will need to be charged when you are not wearing them.

### If your hearing aid uses disposable batteries:

- Store hearing aid batteries in a cool, dry place. Do not put them in a refrigerator. Keep batteries away from anyone who might swallow them, such as children or pets. Batteries are harmful when swallowed! If a battery is swallowed, contact the **National Battery Ingestion Hotline at 1-800-498-8666**.

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- Safely dispose of your hearing aid batteries, recycling them when possible. Do not save up old batteries and dispose of them all at once, as this can be harmful to the environment. Ask your audiologist about any battery recycling guidelines that you need to know.

## Practicing strategic listening

- **Look at the speaker.** Make sure you can see the face of the person speaking. We all speechread in one form or another. This means that you watch someone's lips, gestures, and facial expressions to help you understand what another person is saying.
- **Ask for clarification.** If you heard part of what was said, but not the entire statement, you can repeat back what you DID hear for the speaker to clarify. This gives the speaker more feedback of what you understood rather than simply saying, "What?"
- **Pay attention to lighting.** If it is too dark or you have sun shining in your face, you will not be able to see someone's face clearly.
- **Limit communication from another room or when you cannot see the speaker.** Even for listeners without hearing loss, understanding a speaker from another room may be difficult. Sound gets softer as the distance increases, so the farther away you are from someone, the more difficult it will be for you to hear the sound. Speaking to each other from a close distance or in the same room improves both hearing and visual cues.
- **Listen for key words or ideas.** When you know the topic of conversation, it will help you "fill in the gaps" if you did not understand some of the spoken

words. Ask for clarification if it seems like the subject has changed.

- **Ask for assistive technology, if needed.** For example, theaters and places of worship may have technology available to help you hear better in large spaces. Often, you can use these assistive technology devices with your hearing aids.
- **Move to a quiet spot.** If you are going to a restaurant and have difficulty hearing in background noise, call ahead and request a quiet location in the room.
- **Ask about connectivity options.** Your new hearing aids may have Bluetooth connectivity, meaning that they will work with smartphones and/or tablets. Many hearing aids also can work with devices that connect to your TV and to remote microphones that help improve your hearing ability. Ask your audiologist about these devices.
- **Do not compare your hearing aid experiences with that of others.** Some people adjust to listening with hearing aids shortly after their fitting, whereas others need more time to get use to new sounds.

## An audiologist can help

Hearing aid technology has come a long way, but the knowledge and services provided by your licensed audiologist can make all the difference in successful hearing aid use.

Look for an audiologist who has

- an AuD, PhD, or master's degree;
- ASHA's Certificate of Clinical Competence in Audiology (CCC-A); and
- a valid license in your state

Content contributed by ASHA member Sandra Stumpf Reams, AuD, CCC-A.



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For more information and to view the entire Audiology Information Series library, visit [www.asha.org/aud/pei/](http://www.asha.org/aud/pei/).

For more information about balance problems, preventing falls, hearing loss, hearing aids, or referral to an ASHA-certified audiologist, contact:



**ASHA**  
American  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association

2200 Research Boulevard  
Rockville, MD 20850  
800-638-8255

Email: [audiology@asha.org](mailto:audiology@asha.org)

Website: [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)

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2200 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850 \* 800-638-8255