

# Getting the Most Out of Your New Hearing Aids





## **Be Comfortable. And Maximize Your Listening Experience....**

### **Enjoying the benefits of hearing instruments**

The ability to communicate is likely to be affected when a person has hearing difficulties. Communication is a basic need for all of us – and what is more fun than hearing the sounds of your loved ones and friends, or listening to music that you enjoy, and fully experiencing the beautiful sounds of life!

Congratulations for having taken a step to better hearing. Over 30 million Americans of all ages also have a hearing loss as do hundreds of millions of people around the world. On average, 1 out of every 3 individuals aged 65 years and older has significant hearing loss. The National Council on Aging reports that hearing loss negatively impacts quality of life, personal relationships, communication ability, and it can cause depression.

Today's advanced, ultra-comfortable hearing aids include virtually invisible models that are so small, others may not even notice you are wearing them.



## Adjusting to Your Hearing Aids

Over the years, hearing aids have evolved into complete communication systems. Although no hearing aid can completely restore an individual's hearing to normal, and first-time wearers might need some time to adjust to their new hearing aids, today's hearing aids offer outstanding sound quality and comfort while looking exceptionally discreet.

## Getting Used to Your Hearing Instruments

### Tip 1 Don't Expect to Hear EVERYthing

Do not expect to have "Super-Human Hearing." Even people with "good" hearing cannot hear everything.

Today's advanced hearing aids will *automatically* adjust the volume based upon your hearing loss and the loudness of the sounds within the environment. In most cases, this eliminates the need for volume adjustments by the hearing aid wearer. Many hearing aid styles are available with volume control, if desired.

If your hearing aids are equipped with a volume control, discuss adjusting the volume with your hearing healthcare professional. Remember, turning the volume up too high can result in *distorting* the sound and can also lead to discomfort.

## Tip 2 Get Comfortable Wearing Your Hearing Aids

Hearing aids are made to be worn, on average, 12-16 hours a day. Your hearing aids should become a normal everyday part of your life, similar to wearing glasses or contact lenses. Get up in the morning and put your hearing aids in before beginning your day. At night, take your hearing aids out before going to bed. Some individuals start gradually, wearing their hearing aids a few hours every day and increasing the wearing time over the first month. This will help you get used to your new hearing aids. In the rare instance that you should experience any discomfort when wearing your hearing instrument, consult your hearing healthcare professional.

### Adjust To Your Own Voice

Hearing loss also affects how we hear our own voice. If you have a hearing loss, you have not been hearing your voice the way it truly sounds. It is very likely that at first, your voice will sound “different”, or “not normal” and this is to be expected. The more consistently you wear your hearing aids, the better your voice sounds.

## Tip 3 Give Yourself Time to Discover Better Hearing

Hearing aids are designed to provide you with a greater range of sounds. Encountering all of these “new” sounds may surprise and might even tire you at first. That is why you should:

### Retrain Yourself For More Effective Communication

- Have a positive attitude and be committed to wearing your hearing aids every day. If, at any initial point, you need to take a break, then do so. But come back to wearing your hearing aids as soon as possible.
- Begin with usage at home where you can become accustomed to the sounds and conversation of friends and family in familiar surroundings.

### Be an Active Listener

Your new hearing aids will make it easier to communicate effectively in all situations. However, even people with “good” hearing have to be active listeners and take advantage of speech and environmental cues in order to understand in many situations. Everyone will hear and follow conversation better when they concentrate and learn to ignore or suppress unwanted sounds.

- When you first start wearing your hearing aids, you may be aware of many sounds around you that you do not recognize. These are the sounds of daily life that you have not heard in a long time – if ever – depending on the extent of your hearing loss. Try to identify sounds you don’t recognize, and make a conscious decision to ignore the ones that are unimportant.





### Using the telephone and other personal listening devices

Using the telephone for effective communication is extremely important. There are a number of different ways to improve understanding while using a telephone.

- Most hearing aids today have special circuitry to help cancel or minimize feedback (annoying whistling), allowing you to use the telephone without any special switches or equipment.
- Your hearing aid may also have a telecoil which can be used with both land line and cellular phones.
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) can also provide connections between your hearing aids and telephones, FM systems, computers, MP3 players and more.

## Tip 4 Coping with a Noisy World

We live in an increasingly noisy world. Your hearing aids will reintroduce you to many sounds you may have forgotten, such as the ticking of a clock, the beeps of a coffee maker or microwave oven, the chirping of birds and a child's high-pitched voice. With time, you will learn how to focus on what you want to hear and "tune out" the rest.

### Visiting Public Places

Restaurants, theaters, houses of worship, conference rooms and other public places can be challenging for the hearing aid wearer.

- Sit where listening conditions are best – look closely at your environment and choose wisely. Be sure to sit where you have an unobstructed view of the speaker. In a restaurant, try to sit away from doorways, restrooms or the kitchen.

### Listening to Radio and Television

- Concentrate on trying to follow the overall meaning rather than each individual word. Even people with "good" hearing miss some parts of conversations on the radio or TV.





## Tip 5 Binaural Hearing – Using Two Ears

With a hearing loss in **both** ears, it makes sense to wear **two** hearing aids. We are born with two ears for a reason. When compared to hearing with just one ear, a person can hear sounds from both sides, hear sounds fuller with better clarity, and understand speech better.

## How Hearing Can Change Over Time or Be Damaged By Noise

Deterioration of our hearing, like other senses, begins early and continues as we grow older. The degree of decline differs across individuals. It is related to heredity, genetics, aging and environmental factors. Reduction in hearing is often considered a common part of aging (the medical term used is presbycusis). This does not mean that hearing loss should be accepted passively – and by wearing hearing aids, you are taking positive steps to improve communication with family and friends.

While hereditary/genetic factors cannot be changed, we do have control over

environmental factors. Loud noise is the biggest environmental factor involved in hearing decline. Noise affects the sensory (hair) cells within the cochlea.

You may find yourself misunderstanding certain sounds, making confusions between “s,” “f” and “th” sounds and feeling that you can hear, but not understand. Initial noise exposure results in loss of high frequency (high-pitched) sounds. With repeated noise exposure, there is a greater range of frequencies that are affected.

## Hearing Loss Also Effects Your Family and Friends – And They Should Read This Too!

Support and consideration from friends and family is a major help to someone who is getting used to wearing hearing aids.

Hearing loss is invisible, and in many cases, occurs gradually over many years. But any degree of hearing loss has an affect on the people around us.

Friends and family members should not avoid conversations with those with hearing loss. This is a new day, and it is time to enjoy better communication!



## Tips for Having a Conversation with Someone Who has Hearing Loss

### 1. Use Clear Speech

- Pay attention to making each speech sound fully formed without missing parts or dropping word endings.
- Do not shout – this causes speech to distort and often will become uncomfortable to a person with a hearing impairment.
- When you say words and sentences in a precise, accurate, and fully formed manner, a person with hearing loss can better follow a conversation, resulting in less frustration for everyone.

### 2. Improve the Communication Environment

- Get closer: the ideal distance for normal conversation is approximately 3 feet.
- Do not try to communicate from another room unless it is necessary.
- If possible, move away from the background noise and towards the hearing impaired person. Don't try to have a conversation in rooms with numerous noises.
- Turn down the volume of competing noise – do not try to talk "over" the TV or radio.
- When possible, choose quieter restaurants. If someone with "good" hearing has difficulty hearing in a restaurant, a person with hearing loss will have even more difficulty there.

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### 3. Use Better Communication Skills

- Face the person who has a hearing loss when speaking. Make sure the listener can see your face and lips – visual cues are very helpful to understanding with hearing aids. Keep your hands away from your mouth.
- Periodically cue the topic: “We’re talking about...” This will help fill in the blanks for things that cannot be heard.

### 4. Talk TO the Person, Not “Around Them”

- Listen carefully, and be encouraging to the person with hearing loss as communication starts to improve.
- Do not talk to the spouse, partner, family member or friend instead of the person who has a hearing loss. Talk to the person, not “around” them.
- Be courteous to the feelings of the person with hearing loss. Do not be patronizing – hearing loss has nothing to do with lower intelligence.



## Improved Communication Can Lead to a Better Quality of Life

People with a hearing impairment often wait more than 7 years before actually doing something about their hearing loss. But you don't have to keep missing out on things. The quicker you do something about your hearing, the quicker you can enjoy better communication with your family, friends and loved ones.

Now that you have your hearing aids, be sure to read the instruction manual carefully and do not hesitate to contact your hearing healthcare professional should you have any further questions.



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Hearing aids may not provide the same benefits to all users, and may not be appropriate for everyone with a hearing loss. A hearing professional can test your hearing and determine if hearing aids can help you. Your success with hearing aids depends upon a competent examination, proper fitting and your ability to adapt to a hearing instrument.