



Francis Slabber & Associates

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"Professionals who Care about your Hearing"

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Hear & Now Spring 2015

Extending Battery Life

With the advancement of hearing aid technology and the benefits that this offers, a draw-back has been reduced battery life. Some manufacturers have managed to improve the battery drainage of their hearing aids by allowing certain features to automatically switch on/off as and when needed. Although battery consumption is better now than it has been in previous generations, it's worse than it was years ago when hearing aids weren't as clever.

But there is hope. Ethan Manuell is a teenager in the USA who, with the help of his audiologist, has recently made a discovery that could save people wearing hearing aids a significant amount of money and hassle. He found that the time one waits between activating the battery and placing the battery in the hearing aid has a significant impact on the battery's life. To activate a hearing aid battery, users need to remove a sticker on the battery which allows oxygen to mix with zinc-oxide inside the battery. Manuell found that if one waits 5 minutes after pulling off the sticker, the battery will last 2 to 3 days longer. This is significant considering that batteries usually last anywhere from 4 to 14 days depending on the model and the battery size. By implementing the five minute rule you can improve the battery life by around 25%.

Ethan has won several awards and received recognition for his "5 minute rule" discovery, but he would have been happy just winning 2 days extra per battery for his hearing aids!

Other ways of maximizing your battery performance would be to first wipe any sticker residue off the battery before inserting it and making sure your hands are clean when handling the batteries. Check that your battery contacts are kept clear of debris, typically bits of hair and skin. Have the hearing aid serviced regularly. Defective parts or under-performing components are culprits in increasing the battery drainage of hearing aids. Remember that just because the hearing aid is working, doesn't mean it's working properly and there may be components such as faulty microphones, distorting receivers or corroded battery contacts which drain battery life and affect the performance and sound quality of the instruments. Avoid excessive heat and cold, as well as condensation building up on the battery contacts by using an electronic drying unit.

Monitor your hearing aids' battery consumption by using a battery calendar. We supply these free of charge at all the practices. Please ask for one next time you visit. We sell our batteries at R40 per pack of 6 and we use the SA Hearing brand which are Rayovac batteries. Rayovac is well respected as the leader in quality hearing aid battery manufacture. Remember that used hearing aid batteries should be disposed of safely so please bring your used batteries back to the practice for us to dispose of for you. We are in the process of phasing in mercury free batteries. Battery by battery we are saving the planet!

GETTING USED TO HEARING AIDS

Will hearing aids feel strange in my ears? Will people notice that I am wearing them? Will I get tired more easily? What will my voice sound like when I'm wearing hearing aids? Will I cope with the background noises that already irritate me? Do they fall out or whistle non-stop? Will I be able to hear conversations coming from the room next door?

We get questions like these every day from people who want to try hearing aids. People with hearing loss often know that they need a solution but are uncertain about how the hearing aids will look and feel and how they will adapt to them.

Adjusting to wearing hearing aids is not that difficult, if it's done right. There may be some minor issues at first, but after a few days you should barely notice that you have your hearing aids on. The process of acclimatising to the new aids can be a quick one or one that requires some patience, depending on the time you've been without optimum hearing and how good you are about wearing the new hearing aids. The more you practice hearing with them, the better you get at it.

Hearing aids probably won't feel completely natural when you first try them on. Just like it takes a day or two to adjust to a new pair of glasses, the same rings true for hearing aids.

“My ears feel blocked” At first it may feel like your ears are a bit clogged. Your hearing aids will have vents which helps air pass into your ears to relieve any build-up of air pressure. The amount of ventilation given is determined by the degree of hearing loss and the type of fitting used and is adjustable, so be sure to mention discomfort when you see your audiologist for your follow-up visits.

“It sounds like I am speaking in a barrel” Your own voice may sound different when you first wear hearing aids. This is because your own voice is also amplified as are the other sounds you want to hear more of. You will soon get accustomed to this, but we start the aids off gently so that this is barely noticeable at your first fitting.

“My hearing aids are whistling” High-pitched whistling, called “feedback”, can occur when you insert your hearing aids into your ears, slip clothing over your head, or lean in close for a hug, but mostly only when the instruments are not fully inserted. Most hearing aids today are equipped with feedback management, which aims to eliminate this sound and your audiologist will make sure that the feedback is kept to an absolute minimum.

New hearing aid users often remark that everything sounds a bit loud when they first start using their hearing aids. The clicks from a keyboard, the sound of rushing water, and even the squeak of your shoes may seem more noticeable. This is a good thing – you're hearing sounds you haven't heard in a long time! Now you need to acclimatise to them.

It may be tiring to take in all these new sounds. If you tire easily, try wearing your hearing aids for only a few hours at a time during the first few days and gradually build up to a whole day. It may also help to avoid wearing your hearing aids in excessive noise until you are completely comfortable with them in quiet environments. This way you can gradually adjust to the sounds around you without being overwhelmed. Get acquainted in private and then take them out to dinner!

Most importantly though, is to keep talking to your audiologist. Keep her informed of how you are doing, what you are feeling and your experiences. Try to listen through the hearing aids and not to the hearing aids. We can only assume that all is well when you don't come for follow-up visits so please keep us informed. We need to check your ears and your hearing aids regularly and make appropriate adjustments as and when needed.

Changes... and News

After 8 years Nadine Jooste has decided to spread her wings and explore the other opportunities. Attached is a letter introducing our new star Sarah Buitendag and offering an opportunity for you to meet her. Apologies if you have already received one, we don't mean to clutter postboxes, just to keep you posted.

Congratuatiions to Elisha on a Bronze medal in her 4th Comrades marathon as well as to Beth on her engagement. We are looking forward to the wedding bells this December. Celeste is not only laboring at upgrading our industrial testing program, but will assist in analysing data collected from the attached Hearing Satisfaction Questionnaires. **Please complete the questionnaire** and either drop it off, send it back or bring it along at your next consultation. We will not only use it to address your personal challenges with hearing aids, but to gather satisfaction data to give us an indication of how well hearing aids are received and worn.

During the last few months Francis has been working hard at securing better pricing on ever-increasing hearing aid costs. As a reputable, stable practice we are respected by suppliers and this gives us negotiating power. We now offer 3 year warranties on 4 of the 5 brands that we supply. This is incredibly valuable if you consider the cost of repair and maintenance of hearing aids. It is unfortunately only offered on behind-the-ear models due to the high repair costs of custom instruments. Custom aids are expected to last around 4 years where behind-the-ear aids should last about 5 to 6. Annual services are advised for all makes and models of hearing aids.

Please ask your audiologist about the extended warranties, our battery recycling club as well as the accessories that can be supplied to help with some of the issues that hearing aids can't really help with, such as phones, TV listeners, alerting devices and electronic drying units to avoid moisture damage.

It seems we're back on track with producing offspring! Congrats to Nicole for giving birth to baby Jordan, the newest male member of the Hearing Clinic family! Nicole will be on leave until November but in the meantime the lovely, Swedish Karina Morris will be managing the reception desk in Wynberg. She is a qualified social worker so feels right at home in our team! We will call her in again next year when yet another baby comes along, this time to Belinda, our super efficient logistics and administrative team member.

Francis Slabber

Celeste Leveson

Sarah Buitendag

Beth Cockcroft

Elisha Berridge