

Feeling Blocked Up?

A blocked feeling in the ear when you have your hearing aid(s) in could be due to a few things:

1. Check for wax

Wax in the ear canal may cause the sound from the hearing aid to bounce off it and result in a whistle or cause a “cotton wool” feeling in the ear.

- If your hearing aid(s) used to sound fine, and then started sounding blocked, muffled, or dull, have your ear checked for wax.
- If there is no wax in the ear, check the hearing aid for a wax block that may be preventing the sound from moving through the hearing aid as it should.

2. Occlusion Effect

The Occlusion Effect is the closed off feeling you get when your ears are plugged with your finger, ear moulds, or earphones. We hear through sound moving through the air (into the ear through the ear canal) but also through the bones of our skull that are vibrated by the same sounds. When we speak or chew, these sounds are vibrated through the skull bones. When the ear is unblocked, this sound escapes and we do not notice it. If the ear canal is blocked, additional sound pressure is generated and transferred into the middle and inner ear. The result is a feeling like you are speaking into a barrel, with a hollow or booming quality that is considerably loud.

3. Ear Moulds and Hearing Aids

Ear moulds and hearing aids block the ear to some degree depending on the anatomy of the canal, material used in the ear mould or hearing aid, the depth of insertion, venting (air pressure tube) or a combination of all of these factors.

What can be done?

- Occlusion is mostly dealt with in the first few months of wearing new hearing aid(s). Consistent wearing helps with getting used to the feeling of hearing your own voice, but sometimes this process of adaptation can take a little longer. The brain needs time and opportunity to shape itself around its new hearing world.
- Venting the mould or hearing aid, creating optimum air circulation inside the ear canal can decrease the problem. Unfortunately, these vents can also cause feedback (whistling) and can even compromise the hearing. A deeper shell or ear mould may help in certain situations. Reshelling the hearing aid or sizing up the ear mould to a bigger option may be necessary.