

Why Hearing Aids take some getting used to.

Statistics show that most people wait between 7 – 10 years before doing anything about their hearing loss. However, the auditory memory is only active for 7 years. This means that by the time they get to hearing aids, the brain has had ample time to forget what 'normal sound' sounds like.

Whilst hearing aids, these days, are highly sophisticated devices, they are still just machines, trying to replicate and amplify natural sound. Amplified sounds are quite different to normal hearing and thus take some getting used to.

Studies have found the following to be important when first wearing a hearing aid:

- 1) **Have realistic expectations:** Most people will expect their hearing to immediately go back to normal the moment they first put the hearing aid on. This can't happen because a hearing aid is not replacing your loss. The new sound requires a lot of getting used to by the wearer. Make sure that you clarify your expectations before trying out a new device.
- 2) **Hours of use:** People who wear their hearing aids all day, every day, do better than those who just put them in when they need them. Some may say "but I'm at home alone, I don't need to hear". Just because you aren't actively listening to conversation, does not mean that your brain should go to sleep. The fridge makes a noise, the birds outside make a noise, it's important that you give yourself time to learn what these new sounds are as well as time to get used to them. Learn to filter noises that are "ear-friendly" before you try to filter noise in difficult situations.
- 3) **Degree of Hearing Loss:** Remember that the more severe your hearing loss, the greater the difference will be with and without them in. Sounds may not only sound a bit different to you, but they may be new sounds altogether! Have patience with yourself.

The moral of the story here is, you cannot get used to something that you are not exposed to. Wear the hearing aids from morning to night (except when you bath, swim or shower, and take them out when you go to bed) and you will find that you will acclimatise to the new sound and even wonder how you managed without them. 5 – 8 hours a day is usually recommended in the beginning, but you will end up with 12 – 15 hours wear per day. You may find that baby steps are easier to manage: wear your hearing aid in quiet places first, before graduating to noisy environments which require a lot more concentration. Finally, expect to have to see your audiologist at least twice after the fitting for some fine-tuning adjustments. This is completely normal and necessary – everyone is different and need individual adjustments to their new hearing ears.

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