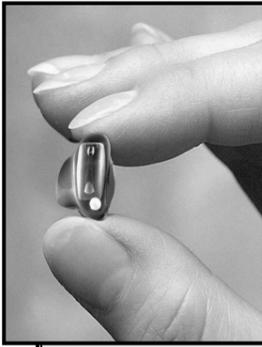




## Newsletter Autumn 2010



### Hearing Aid Misconceptions

Hearing aids today are sophisticated, well-designed instruments, not only comfortable to wear but with many options to make them as appropriate as possible to each user. They are designed to cater for all hearing losses and lifestyles and are usually chosen after open discussion between the audiologist and the wearer as to what their hearing and lifestyle needs are. The days of ear trumpets and pink bananas are over.

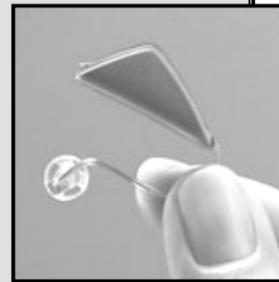
Many people still have the impression that hearing aids don't help, don't function well, are expensive, unsightly and uncomfortable to wear. Most of these misconceptions come from their observations of parents or grandparents experiences, but thankfully, as with all electronic devices, times have changed and many of the software / hardware advances made in the computer, cell phone and audio-visual fields, have filtered down to hearing aid technology. Some common misconceptions include:

👂 Hearing aids do not work and do not help. Not true. The degree of help that you get from a modern hearing aid depends on your hearing loss. Hearing aids are adapted individually by the audiologist, and given enough time for the wearer to get used to them, they are almost always useful. Hearing aids will not restore your hearing to normal, but they do result in better hearing and improved quality of life. The degree of benefit will however vary from person to person and one should never compare hearing, hearing aids or benefit from hearing aids. Everyone is different in this regard.

👂 Hearing aids are big and unsightly. Not true. Today, most hearing aids are small, discreet and well-designed. They can be worn behind-the-ear or custom made to fit inside the ear but most are tiny, colour matched to hair/skin tone and almost invisible. They are very comfortable to wear and most people comment on how quickly they forget that there is something in their ears!

👂 Hearing aids are expensive. Not all true. As with most things, the best of the best is expensive, but if we compare what one could get for the same money 10 years ago, it is clear that out-of-reach technology has become more accessible and much cheaper. For an entry level hearing aid today, one can pay around R6000, but the same technology would have cost R10000 not 5 years ago. For a top-end aid, one can pay up to R25000, but again, the technology used today was not even dreamt of 5 years ago when the best at the time cost the same. There is also a world of choice between the R6000 and R25000 levels, and again one should be guided by what one needs from the aid rather than purely the cost of it.

Most medical aids contribute to hearing aids and now a company called First Health Finance is offering flexible financing options where medical aid cover is insufficient or not available. They can be contacted at 0800 212 537 or visit [www.fhf.co.za](http://www.fhf.co.za). Later this year, we will also be able to charge hearing aids to account cards such as Edgars, Jet and Boardmans. Although these transactions will carry a 10% surcharge, at least one can pay off accounts over 6 months without additional interest added!



*Due to the fact that hearing aids have become so small and comfortable, they do tend to get lost quite easily. Cats, dogs, shoes and pools have done their fair share of damage too and this is not covered by manufacturer warranties. Please check the replacement value of your hearing aids annually and specify them on your all risks insurance for loss or damage!*

***Please bring your used hearing aid batteries back to us and we will send them for recycling!***

## Hearing Aids Take Getting Used To

The longer you use your hearing aids, the better you'll like them. Getting used to and getting the full benefit from your hearing aids may take, on average, 6 to 12 months.

Most hearing-impaired people wait far too long before getting hearing aids and by then they have often forgotten what it is like to have normal hearing. This is why voices and noises may seem very loud at first but with gradual adjustment and fine tuning, this can be avoided. Amplified sounds are quite different when compared to normal hearing and this takes getting used to.

An American study involving 92 older individuals examined the expectation of new hearing aid wearers and their subsequent actual experiences.

People who have never used hearing aids before have extremely high expectations, but they are often disappointed in their first year of active hearing aid use because the devices take so much getting used to. While many wearers are under the impression that it only takes one visit to get it right, repeated adjustments of the hearing aids can be required. This is why it becomes so important to build a relationship with your audiologist where you both understand and trust each other. Instant gratification is often expected but not realistic. Once people get used to life with their hearing aids, they find things sound "wrong" without them.

The number of hours of daily use of new hearing aids was found to be most important. The more you wear the hearing aids, the happier you will be with the results. Also, a logical correlation was found between the degree of hearing loss and the level of satisfaction. People with severe hearing losses experience greater benefits sooner from using their hearing aids because the difference between having them and not having them is so obvious, where as people with milder losses take a bit longer to get used to them because the benefit is more subtle.

In conclusion, it stands to reason that you can't benefit from something you don't wear, you can't get used to something that you don't expose yourself to on a regular basis and you can't give a realistic report on the benefit of something that you haven't become used to!

### Some tips for new wearers:

- 👂 When you get a new hearing aid, aim to wear it for at least 5 to 8 hours per day, everyday.
- 👂 Come back for fine tuning – at least twice in the first month – and persevere.
- 👂 In the first week or two, limit your exposure to excessive noise and only then start introducing more challenging listening environments where you can "practise" hearing.
- 👂 Have realistic expectations. Remember, your hearing aid cannot restore your hearing to normal, but given a fair chance will benefit you in most environments.
- 👂 Also remember that not all hearing aids are created equal and most are developed for particular losses, needs and lifestyles. Choose appropriately when you consider a new one.



***On 24 February Francis gave birth to a baby girl, Alice. Both mom and baby are doing well - finding their feet (literally) and getting to know each other. She should be back in action from May/June and although her hours will be a little adjusted to adapt to her new-mom role, she will be available at both the Wynberg and Tokai practices. Meanwhile, Debbie has been covering for Francis and has proven herself more than capable. Janet is keeping the boat afloat in Wynberg while Nadine is as always in Fish Hoek and Wynberg and Elisha in Claremont and Wynberg. To avoid a wasted trip, unless you have an appointment, phone ahead before popping in to see Elisha at Claremont – she might be consulting and will not be able to attend to you.***

<i>Wynberg</i>	<i>35 Waterloo Rd</i>	<i>Monday to Friday</i>	<i>8h30 - 17h00</i>	<i>021 - 797 7948</i>
<i>Tokai</i>	<i>Tokai Village</i>	<i>Tuesday &amp; Thursday</i>	<i>8h30 - 16h30</i>	<i>021 - 715 5623</i>
<i>Claremont</i>	<i>19 Belvedere Rd</i>	<i>Monday &amp; Wednesday</i>	<i>9h00 - 15h30</i>	<i>021 - 797 7948</i>
<i>Fish Hoek</i>	<i>Valyland Centre</i>	<i>Wednesday &amp; Friday</i>	<i>8h30 - 16h30</i>	<i>021 - 782 3322</i>

***FRANCIS SLABBER & JANET STEER & NADINE JOOSTE & ELISHA BERRIDGE***  
***AUDIOLOGIST ACOUSTICIAN AUDIOLOGIST AUDIOLOGIST***