



Advice for first-time hearing aid users



This is the ninth in a series of information booklets from Widex on hearing and hearing-related subjects.

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high definition hearing

The road to better hearing

As a first-time hearing aid user it is very important to set off on the right path.

Most modern hearing aids offer a multitude of features to help compensate for most types of hearing loss. Thanks to the latest technology, it is usually possible to provide a customised solution for individual users, to ensure they hear a clear, natural and comfortable sound quality.

In order to accomplish this, users need to try out and get used to their new hearing aids, which means that the hearing aids should be worn as much as possible.



A world with new sounds



Becoming a hearing aid user for the first time can be an exciting challenge, so it is important to take the necessary time to become used to all the new sounds.

Your hearing aid does not restore normal hearing, but it brings back sounds that you may not have heard or thought about for years – everyday sounds such as a ticking clock, dripping water, the television, the car, footsteps on hard floors, children’s voices, music, doors banging, laughter, tools, machinery, etc. All these sounds can be a bit overwhelming when heard again after many years.

The human ear is a truly remarkable organ for picking up sound. But it is the brain that translates all sound information into what we perceive as hearing. It is therefore not just the ears, but also the brain that needs time to become accustomed to distinguishing all the new sounds.

Practice makes perfect

It is a good idea to start slowly and wear your hearing aids for just short periods of time, for example one or two hours, in situations with few people and not too much noise. Gradually you can then start using them for longer periods of time and in noisier environments. It is important that you allow yourself the time needed to get used to the new sounds and the new sensation in your ears.

During the first couple of days, the sound reproduced by the hearing aids may be perceived as unnatural, and it may be difficult to recognise and distinguish between the various sounds. You should also be aware that hearing all these new sounds can become tiring, so again it is a good idea initially to wear the hearing aids for periods of one to two hours during the day, and preferably in varied quieter listening situations.





Hearing loss varies from one individual to another, and fine tuning of the hearing aid by your hearing care professional can be of crucial importance. If, after some weeks of use, the sound in the hearing aid is still perceived as, for example, unnatural or too loud, fine tuning is probably required. Perhaps the hearing aid amplifies the wrong frequencies (high or low pitched tones). Or maybe it provides too much amplification in a frequency region where you are especially sensitive to sound, making it uncomfortable to wear.

Help to help yourself

Most modern hearing aids are designed with a multitude of options, settings and features to help compensate for most types of hearing loss. Your new hearing aids will be adjusted according to your hearing loss/hearing to give you the best and most comfortable and natural sound reproduction.

But, after a period of use, your hearing aid may still need to be fine tuned by your hearing care professional. Perhaps you have realised that you need new features, or maybe there are situations where the loudness level or sound reproduction is not satisfactory. Before your next consultation with your hearing care professional, it is important that you carefully consider how your new hearing aids are suiting you. If a user is not specific, but only says that *“the hearing aid sounds wrong”*, it can be difficult for the hearing care professional to fine tune the sound of the hearing aid appropriately.





In most digital hearing aids, it is possible to adjust the balance between loud and soft sounds. This may be necessary if loud sounds are uncomfortably loud, while the sound in quiet environments is comfortable. You may also note that soft sounds (ticking of a clock, refrigerator hum, distant traffic noise) seem unnaturally loud, but keep in mind that you are now noticing sounds that may previously not have been clearly audible. Use your family and friends to provide a comparison on how sounds seem for someone with normal hearing.

Make a note of the situations where you are not satisfied and why. Try to describe your experiences in as detailed a manner as possible, so that you and your hearing care professional have something to go on when you meet again.

Having something in your ear

Your ears need to become accustomed to your new hearing aids. If you are a first-time user, you also have to get used to having something in your ear. It is not uncommon to feel a sensation of pressure and a little soreness in your ear for the first few days. If this sensation does not disappear within a week – or if you feel pain in your ear – the earmould/in-the-ear hearing aid is probably not fitting properly. In rare cases an itching or burning sensation or allergy can occur in the ear. If this does not disappear within a couple of weeks, you should consult an ENT doctor. Make sure that the hearing aids are positioned correctly in your ear. It is important that the earmould (behind-the-ear) or shell (in-the-ear) fits snugly in the ear canal. Otherwise, the hearing aids will not work optimally or feedback whistling may occur. If your earmould/in-the-ear hearing aid has a poor physical fit, consult your hearing care professional to have it adjusted.





Perception of one's own voice

When people are first fitted with hearing aids, they may perceive their own voices as sounding unnatural in the beginning. This usually passes after a short period of time. If it remains very noticeable, some hearing aid adjustments may be required. At first, it may be difficult to evaluate how soft or loud one's own voice is. It is a good idea to have your family and friends help you find the right volume. Also the sounds of your teeth, chewing and crispy bread, as well as the sensation of blocked ears, are things that may take time to get used to. The design of the vent in the earmould/in-the-ear hearing aid may be of significance to your perception of these sounds.

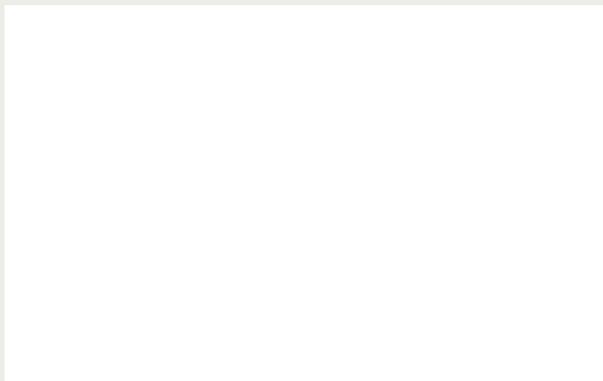
Expectations

Most users will be able to hear significantly better with well-functioning hearing aids. This makes communication easier and can increase one's quality of life and the ability to participate in working and everyday activities on equal terms with others. Modern hearing aids are also able to reduce unwanted noise, so that walking on the street or being at a social event is not perceived as a cacophony of competing sounds.



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