

Cold: Very cold temperatures can make the aid sound faint until it's warmed up. Do not wear the aid outside if the temperature is below freezing and don't leave your aid on a windowsill in these conditions.

Cocktail sticks and toothpicks: Do not use either of these as they are thin and they can break easily inside tubing and ear mould.

Pins: These may tear the tubing or ear mould. They can also break a receiver.

Hairspray: It can clog the microphone as it is sticky. Remove aid if spraying your hair.

Leaking battery: Corrosive fluid can damage the aid. This dries and makes a hard, white powder.

When not to wear your hearing aid

When sleeping: you might damage the aid or hurt your ear when you lie on it

In the bath/shower: water damages aids

When swimming: may result in water damage and/or possible loss

When using the hair dryer: heat can damage the aid

When using hairspray: it may clog the microphone

When out in the rain or snow: may result in water damage

When you have a discharge, earache or sore ears inside your ear.



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prevent corrosion (leakage) which damages the aid.

Hearing aid batteries are available to buy from the Cork Deaf Association at a lower than average retail selling price.

Hearing Aid Disaster Areas

Beware!

Pets: Dogs and cats will chew your aid.

Young children: Keep it out of their reach; it might get broken, lost or end up in the fire or water.

Dropping the aid: There are tiny delicate parts in the aid which break easily if you let it fall. Always clean and/or change the tube or battery over a table with a towel spread on it so that it will not fall on the floor.

Dirt and dust: Keep aid clean and away from dust and dirt which can damage the microphone and quality of sound.

Water: Keep aid well away from sink, bathtub and swimming pool as it could easily fall into the water and get damaged.

Perspiration: This is the equivalent of water damage. Ears often perspire if you are physically active or feeling very hot.

Heat: Very hot temperatures can melt the hearing aid. Keep the aid well away from cookers and radiators. Remove when using a hairdryer. Do not let your aid lie in the sun if you're sunbathing. Do not leave it on a windowsill on a hot sunny day.

Hearing Aid Care

A battery can die at any time. This is why you should always have extra ones at home. When you are buying batteries you should always get enough to last for a month at the least. Most batteries last about a week to ten days. The battery life depends on how often you wear the aid and how loud you turn the volume control. If the volume is loud all the time then the battery life will be shorter. Remember to bring a sufficient supply if you are going away on holidays. Store batteries in a cool, dry place.

Testing the battery

Test the battery every morning before putting on the hearing aid. If weak, the aid will sound weak and scratchy.

- Hold the hearing aid in your hand
- Turn on the aid
- Turn volume up to full strength
- Cup the hearing aid and hold it up to your ear; the aid will whistle if the battery is strong.

Taking care of the battery

- Always buy the right batteries for your type of aid
- Match the plus sign (+) on the battery to the (+) on your aid.
- The battery must be clean for good sound reproduction.
- When the hearing aid is not in use switch it off. If the hearing aid is out of use for a long time, remove the battery to

Adjusting to Hearing Aids

Hearing aids open up a whole new world of sounds. You hear things you didn't even realise you were missing. You hear sounds and voices, including your own, differently. Adjusting to the hearing aids and to a different way of hearing is an experience unique to each person. Every person adapts at different rates:

- Some within a few days
- Others take a year or longer
- Some people give up on them before learning to adjust

Before you leave the dispenser or audiologist who has fitted your aid you should ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does the dispenser's voice sound comfortably loud?
2. Does the dispenser's voice sound natural?
3. How does your own voice sound to you?
4. Is sound tinny or sharp?
5. How do a variety of noises in the dispenser's office—paper rustling, footsteps, phone—sound?

Now is the time to talk to the audiologist about what you are experiencing with your new hearing aids. Your voice and other sounds will sound 'different' but this is all part of the adjustment period and quite normal.

Hearing Aid Support

It is very important for the dispenser to verify that the settings of the hearing aids are appropriate for the correction of your particular hearing loss. If the correction is inadequate, then readjustments may be required. If it still proves unsatisfactory for you but the dispenser states that it is at an adequate level then you may need to speak to someone about hearing aid support.

Hearing Aid support

The Cork Deaf Association has a staff member who can talk to you about your new aids explaining how you can get accustomed to them. The improvement in your hearing will depend on:

- The level of hearing loss you have
- The listening difficulties you experience
- Your expectations of the benefits of the aid(s)

Setting Expectations

1. Give your aids a fair trial—don't give up quickly. Some sounds will initially startle you and you will not be satisfied with the aids but do persevere.
2. Don't wear the aids turned off in your ears—they will function only as ear plugs and will increase your loss of hearing

- Lectures and sermons
- Restaurants and pubs

If you feel the hearing aids are too loud, have the confidence to turn them down.

Week Four

Gradually expose yourself to louder, noisier situations e.g. restaurants, pubs, crowded rooms, parties etc. Voices in large groups may still seem like a jumble; your hearing aid can make the background noise so loud that it swamps the voice of the person you are trying to hear. Adjust the volume a bit lower to the point where the noise is less noticeable but the voices around you are still slightly louder. This will be difficult at first. It takes practice to be able to adjust your volume quickly and to learn to reduce some background noise while following the conversation.

If you find this frustrating don't give up! Persevere with your hearing aids in all noisy places for at least part of the time you are there. You can take your aids out for a while if you feel you need to. Before you do however, try reducing the volume systematically even if it's very low. With continued practice and perseverance you will start to notice that you are able to wear your hearing aids in most situations and have a better quality of hearing.

Week Two

Listen in a slightly noisier place.

Converse with one person in your home with some background noise which you can introduce at will e.g. television, radio, vacuum cleaner etc. Ordinarily you wouldn't want to interfere with your conversation with someone but regard this as useful practice for the real world of noise. In this setting try:

- Having a one-to-one conversation
- Adding another person to the conversation
- Adding more people to your group

This can be made into a social gathering and no one will even know that you are practising with your aids! This practice should continue regularly until you feel confident.

Week Three

Begin wearing your aids in public places. Continue until you have experienced most of the listening situations with which you are most familiar:

- Car journeys
- Shopping trips
- Traffic noise
- Church, theatre, cinema

- by blocking sound from entering your ears.
3. *Remember* hearing aids are an aid to hearing, not a cure for hearing loss. Despite the great advances in technology over the years, no hearing aid has yet been designed which can duplicate normal hearing.
 4. *Hearing aids do not block out background noise.* Many digital manufacturers and dispensers often make this claim. Conversation does not become crystal clear even with noise reduction circuits which reduce the background noise; they don't eliminate it.
 5. Hearing aids amplify the sound that is right around you.
 6. Most hearing aids detect louder sounds better than softer sounds. Hearing aids pick up and amplify louder sounds, sometimes at the expense of softer sounds. This is why, at a restaurant you may seem to hear the talking from surrounding louder tables better than you can hear your own closer companions who are talking more softly.
 7. Your hearing aid experience is a personal one. You may know people who complain about their hearing aids and perhaps do not even wear them. You may also know others who would not be without them. *You* need to adjust to them in *your* own way. It doesn't mean you have failed if you need more time to adjust than your friend does.

Four Week Adjustment Programme

Hearing generally deteriorates over time so you may have adjusted gradually to not hearing as well as you once did. *Now*, you must adjust to hearing again.

At first all sounds may seem to jump out at you and be extremely loud and uncomfortable. It takes time and practice to sort out important sounds from less important ones. Your brain will eventually censor out the sounds it does not have to pay as much attention to such as the fridge, footsteps, toilet flushing etc. The following four week step-by-step programme will hopefully start you on the journey to successful hearing aid use.

Week One

1. Begin at home in a quiet part of the house. Have a one-to-one conversation with someone whose voice and lip patterns are familiar. This allows you to become accustomed to amplified speech without any distractions.
2. Read aloud to yourself and listen to the sound of your own voice. It may seem louder.
3. Listen to a favourite television or radio programme with your aids switched on. Voices on radio and TV are already amplified and may sound different through your aids.

4. Listen to the sounds in your home carefully and become accustomed to them:
 - Fridge and fluorescent lights—do they hum?
 - The crackling sound of paper
 - The clang of dishes as you set the table or wash them
 - Footsteps
 - Key turning in the door
 - The doorbell
 - Squeaky chair
 - Creaky floorboards
 - Tap dripping
 - Toilet flushing
 - Clock ticking
5. Pace yourself and don't get tired.
 - Wear aids for 2 hours three times each day (morning, afternoon and evening)
 - Slowly increase your wearing time by one hour each day. By the end of the week you should be able to wear your hearing aids more frequently.
6. During this week practice all the good habits for cleaning and storing your aids.