



# Your Guide to **Care and Maintenance of Hearing Aids**

## Introduction:

For the millions of people around the world using them, hearing aids are a valuable investment as they open a wide window of opportunity to gain the best out of life. Though expensive, this tiny piece of technology has amazing capabilities that can have a life altering impact on the person wearing it.

Learning how to care and maintain your hearing aids in top condition is essential to every user. Here we provide you some common issues that you may come across as well as solutions that can help you.

### The main issues addressed in this e-book are

① Batteries	④ Moisture/corrosion/dirt	⑥ Static/noise
② Ear wax	⑤ Telephone use	⑦ prevention.
③ Earmold/venting issues	⑤ Feedback	

### Issues with batteries:

If your hearing aid is not functional due to battery issues, it could be because they are either weak or defective batteries, or you may have inserted the batteries backwards which may have interchanged the positive and negative polarity required to get it functional. An effective technique to conserve battery life is to keep the battery compartment door of the hearing device open, when not in use for a prolonged time. Ie, overnight/ when the user sleeps for extended hours.



Keeping a calendar of when the last battery change has been made helps in ensuring you get the most out of every battery used in your hearing aid. If you find frequent battery changes are needed, analyse further. It may also be likely the hearing aid device is faulty and draws excess battery charge than what it ought to. Therefore, you can get the hearing aid checked for device defects.

### Issues with ear wax:

Ear wax is the natural, waxy substance secreted in the passage of the outer ear and is intended to protect the ear from any foreign substances entering it. A thin layer of ear wax over your hearing aid can render it dysfunctional. One way of dealing with earwax obstruction is to get your ear canals cleaned by a qualified medical professional.



Further, every night, you can inspect your hearing aid to see if there is any wax accumulation and block ages. Remember to clean them regularly using special tools provided in the hearing aid kit.

### **Ear mold and venting issues that affect comfort & sound quality:**

Common causes of ear discomfort could be an ill-fitting earmold or hearing aid shell. Also, the device may be incorrectly positioned in your ear, which is a common experience with new users. Ear pieces are made with measurements from impressions of your ear. Though customised to your ear specifications, there are times when the movement of the jaw (while chewing, speaking etc) may also lead to discomfort when the earpieces are in place. In such instances, it is better to consult your healthcare professional to seek a solution within the trial period of using a new hearing aid.



A vent in an earmold or hearing aid is an open passageway or tube that extends from the front of the earpiece to the tip. An important use of a vent is to decrease the acoustic effects of your own voice when using the ear piece. Vents should always be kept open to perform their intended function. Your healthcare professional shall be able to instruct you on how to clean vents regularly.

### **Moisture, corrosion, dirt & related intermittence:**

Moisture is a natural outcome of bodily functions. The amount of moisture in the ear canal in each person can vary basis the level of activity and climatic conditions surrounding the user. Hearing aids do not operate well in high moisture conditions and hence, must not be worn while bathing, swimming, sauna/steam bath etc (unless they are of a waterproof model). While natural moisture build-up cannot be eliminated, regular cleaning every night in addition to leaving the battery doors open is a step towards increasing the longevity of your hearing aid.



Dirt transferred from your fingertips, corrosion from the battery contact points and residues of oily skin of the user are other factors that can cause intermittent problems in the functioning of your ear piece. Daily cleaning is a must-do for all users.

## Telephone issues:

A hearing aid user may experience difficulty in receiving telephone calls. In such case, understand from your healthcare provider if your device has a telecoil circuit, which is a mechanism specially devised to enhance telephone reception amongst users. Before you select a hearing aid, understand if telephone reception is included in your must-have functionality list. You can determine this by analysing if you conduct a majority part of your work/ profession over the phone. If yes, mention it to the healthcare provider so that a suitable hearing aid model can be chosen.



In addition, the user has to practice constantly and consistently to become familiar with the device settings that permit optimum telephone reception.

Before purchasing a cell phone, undertake adequate research to understand if your chosen cell phone model is compatible with your hearing aid.

## Feedback issues:

Feedback is the term used for the high-pitched squeal commonly associated with amplifiers that have microphones and loudspeakers connected to them. Similarly, in the case of hearing aids, the squeal is caused by amplified sound that radiates from the speaker which is inadvertently picked up by the microphone and gets continuously re-amplified. Users may experience the squeal in case of an ill-fitting ear mold or when there is a shift in the position of the device in your ear canal or when you are trying to tune up the volume of the ear piece to a desired level. These problems can be resolved in consultation with your hearing healthcare provider. Wax buildup in your ear canals is also another reason for feedback.

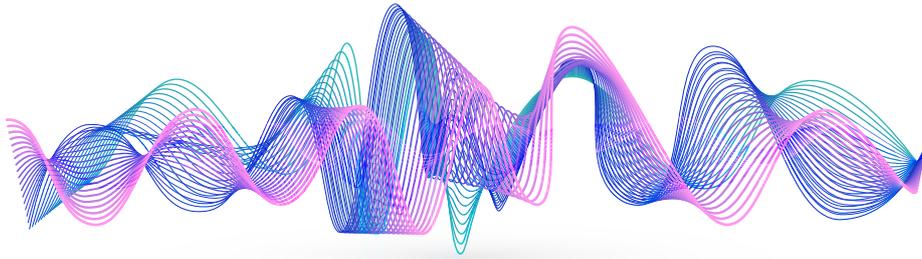


Feedback is also common in telephone reception and usage. With analog hearing aids, careful positioning of the telephone receiver by moving it a slight distance from the ear or tilting it at a slight angle often eliminates feedback while still allowing adequate reception. If feedback problems persist, a donut-shaped, sponge product-like product that fits onto the receiver of the phone can be purchased from your hearing healthcare provider.

## Static and other unwanted sounds:

Static resulting from internal causes means that the noise is created from some problem inside the hearing aid or telephone and not existing in the environment. If you begin to hear strange sounds from your hearing aid, it's time to check if there is adequate battery voltage or if there is dirt or moisture in the battery door contact points. Regular cleaning and servicing will help tackle these problems.

For users who spend more time outdoor, the wind noise can be bothersome. Discuss what options are available to reduce this disturbance (windhood/windscreen/ CIC-style fitting) before you select a hearing aid. Background noise, cannot be eliminated entirely and users have to practice blocking it just as people with normal hearing do.



## Preventive hearing aid maintenance:

Hearing aids are an expensive investment and hence, regular servicing and maintenance can increase its longevity.



### Some tips you can follow are:

- Daily cleanup to remove moisture, wax, dirt buildup
- Opening the battery compartment doors overnight to allow ventilation
- Proper storage in the form of dust-free carrying cases or closed container with an absorbent dry-pack
- Scheduled regular servicing of the device with hearing healthcare provider.

It is always recommended to keep a spare set of hearing aids to deal with any emergencies arising from unexpected break-down of the current device being used. Ensure you rotate the use of the spare hearing aid with the current one. This will ensure the spare set remains functional and can be used anytime needed.

## Conclusion

When you purchase a hearing aid, discuss your requirements openly with your hearing healthcare provider and get a model best suited for your lifestyle. In the trial period offered by the provider, practice using the hearing aid consistently to understand if you are facing any feedback issues. Understand the device settings that work best for you and do not hesitate to consult professionals or enlist family and friends to support you through this process of experimentation. Caring for your hearing aids is the best way to get the most out of them and out of life!

