What to Expect From Hearing Aids

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1. Getting used to your hearing aids.

Most people gradually lose their hearing over the course of time. On average, people experience hearing difficulties for five to seven years before seeking help. Thus, it has often been some time since hearing certain sounds such as birds chirping, road noises or the hum of a fan. When a person gets hearing aids, all of these sounds come back fairly quickly. An adjustment period is needed for the person to become comfortable hearing all of these wonderful sounds again.

2. Your own voice will sound different.

Along with other peoples' voices and environmental sounds, hearing aids amplify your own voice. Therefore, your own voice may sound different to you and may sound louder than usual. This difference is also part of the adjustment period. The more you wear your hearing aids, the more natural your voice will sound.

3. Hearing aids are not "new ears."

The majority of people with hearing loss have a permanent type of loss that affects their nerve endings or the nerve of hearing (auditory nerve) itself. Hearing aids cannot correct this permanent damage and cannot restore your hearing to normal. Instead, hearing aids simply provide assistance to help you hear sounds better. They are one component of the listening process.

4. The clarity vs. loudness issue

Hearing aids are designed to amplify sounds so you can hear them. For most people, this increase in audibility also increases the ability to understand speech: If you can hear it, you can understand it! However, for some people, the clarity in their ears is compromised. Even if a sound is loud enough to be audible, the

sound is not clear. Unfortunately, hearing aids cannot make sounds clearer; they can only make sounds louder.

5. Use communication strategies.
As mentioned earlier, hearing aids do not restore your hearing to normal. It is unrealistic to think that you will be able to hear everything that everyone is saying, even with hearing aids. Therefore, if you follow these communication strategies, you and your family will notice an improvement in your hearing ability.

6. Get help from friends and family.
Hearing loss poses difficulties for the hard-of-hearing person as well as their normally hearing friends and family members. Now that you are getting the help you need from hearing aids, you should also ask for help from your communication partners. Ask them to speak to you from the same room, get your attention before speaking to you by either calling your name or tapping you on the shoulder and eliminate distracting noise from the television, water running in the sink or radio. The more help they give you, the less frustration you will all experience.

7. Have realistic expectations.
Remember, in a noisy restaurant or at a party, most people, even those with normal hearing, cannot hear perfectly. At the movies, people with normal hearing miss some dialogue. Keeping your expectations reasonable will help you from feeling disappointed.

Wearing a hearing aid for the first time takes some time to adjust. Even if you have worn hearing aids for several years, getting a new set of hearing aids will be a little different and take some time.

Hearing through a hearing aid is not your natural hearing.

You are hearing through a device and your brain needs time to get used to the new sound. For some people this takes a few days, for others it may take several weeks. Here are some tips for new hearing aid users.

Six Tips to get the best out of your hearing aids

Tip 1: Don't Expect to Hear Everything

There are certain sounds you may still miss. While the hearing aid technology is improving, hearing aids are not perfect. You need to have realistic expectations for what your hearing aids can do for you. Do not expect to now understand your spouse from the other room. Even people with good hearing cannot hear everything. The optimal distance for speech understanding is 5 feet.

Tip 2: Wear Both Hearing Aids Together

Your brain needs both ears functioning together to process sound most effectively. While you may get by with one hearing aid, it is going to be more beneficial if you wear them both together all the time.

Tip 3: Make Your Hearing Aids an Everyday Part of Life

Just like you comb your hair and brush your teeth in the morning, you should put your hearing aids in. They are meant to be worn 12-16 hours a day, not just when you think you need them. If you experience discomfort in your ears when wearing your hearing aids, talk to your Hearing Healthcare Professional.

Tip 4: Give Yourself Time to Adjust to Your Voice

If you have been living with hearing loss for a while, you have grown accustomed to hearing your own voice through your hearing loss. When wearing hearing aids for the first time, adjusting to the sound of your voice is one of the hardest parts. The more consistently you wear your hearing aids, the more natural your voice will sound again.

Tip 5: The World is Noisy Place

One of the biggest complaints from new hearing aid users is that everything is too noisy. That is not necessarily the hearing aids fault. The world is a noisy place and if you have been living with a hearing loss, you may have forgotten how noisy it really is. When wearing hearing aids for the first time you are going to hear sounds you may have forgotten….your refrigerator running, the sound of you chewing, a ticking clock, chirping of birds, etc. With time your brain will learn to filter those unimportant noises out by wearing your hearing aids consistently.

Tip 6: Become an Active Listener

Listening takes effort. Your hearing aids will make it easier for you to communicate, but you also must listen. Take advantage of environmental and speech cues and engage in the conversation. Stay positive. Improved communication can lead to a better life.

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