



Portsmouth Hospitals  
University  
NHS Trust

# What can I expect from my hearing aid?

Audiology Department

## Specialist Support

This leaflet can be made available in another language, large print or another format. Please speak to a member of staff who can advise you

**Working together** To drive excellence in care for our patients and communities



## What should I expect from my hearing aid?

- A hearing aid is not a “quick fix” solution – it takes **time**, **practice** and **perseverance**. It is an **aid** to your hearing and not a **fix** for the underlying hearing loss. Therefore, you will need to use communication tactics (please see overleaf) in conjunction with using your hearing aid to maximise communication.
- The hearing aids are designed to make the best of your residual hearing. There may be sounds that you will not hear as clearly as you remember them even when using the hearing aids.
- Digital hearing aids adjust themselves depending on the listening environment and how much background noise there is:
  - Quieter sounds will be raised to help you hear them
  - Louder sounds will not be made any louder by the hearing aid.
- When you are newly fitted with a hearing device or have an older device upgraded it will take a period of time to adjust to the sound levels. This can vary from person to person and can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months to adjust to the sound.
- You may notice the following:
  - Your own voice appears to sound hollow or have an echo
  - Noises sound higher pitched or tinny. This may include cutlery, newspapers rustling and clocks ticking.
  - Sounds are amplified that you do not wish to hear. This may include footsteps, breathing and sounds when eating.
  - Sounds are louder and amplified compared to when not using your hearing aid.





- The more you wear your hearing aid, the quicker you will adapt to the above sounds. Due to hearing loss the brain becomes used to not hearing some sounds. It will take some time for you to become used to hearing them again. These sounds have always been there and with time you will re-learn to filter them out again.
- Wearing the hearing aids in situations where you feel you may not necessarily need them such as; at home in quiet environments will help the brain to get used to the sound of them. This will then help your brain filter sounds better in noisier environments.
- When you are first fitted with the hearing aid you can either wear this all day to begin with or gradually increase the length of time per day you are wearing this. This is your choice on which you feel most comfortable with.
  - You can begin with an hour on the first day and then increase wearing time gradually over the following few days to weeks.
  - You are still aiming to increase wearing time until you are wearing the hearing aid all day, every day.
  - You should not wear the hearing aid still when there is any contact with water (swimming, washing and heavy rain) and when sleeping.
- If you are fitted with two hearing aids they are set to work as a pair. To maximise the benefit of them they need to be worn together.
- **The right hearing aid has a red marker and the left hearing aid has a blue marker** to identify the correct ear they need to be worn in.
- Please be aware that busier and noisier situations will always be more difficult for hearing in, even when using hearing aids. **There is no hearing aid that can cut out background noise completely.** Please see overleaf for tips for communicating in background noise.





- The hearing aid can be adjusted, particularly if it is the first time you have used them, to reduce the level of them while you become used to the sound. Please be aware that reducing the level of the hearing aids will reduce the level of all sounds and not just background noises.



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When someone speaks, clues are gained from what we hear and what we see. You may be able to create a situation to maximise these clues.

- All hearing aids and devices are an **aid** to your hearing and are not a **fix** for any underlying hearing loss.
- Due to this, considerations need to be made for the best communication.
- When someone speaks, clues are gained from what we hear and what we see. Therefore, using these clues together can maximise communication in each situation.

## Environment considerations to maximise listening

- Reduce background noise wherever possible by moving further away from any sound sources.
  - Consider moving away from sound sources such as speakers playing music or kitchens where noise may be coming from.
  - In the home consider turning off the television or radio.
  - If you are in a seated environment such as in a restaurant or cafe then request or seat yourself at a table to the outer edge of the room, so you are not placed in the middle of the room and background noise.
  - If possible, seat yourself with your back towards the most noise and whoever you would like to converse with in front of you with their back towards a wall. This will maximise the effectiveness for separating out as much noise from the speech as possible.
- Communicate in rooms with softer furnishings such as living rooms as this will absorb sound and reduce echo.
- Ensure the room is well lit so you can clearly see the speaker's face to increase lip-reading or in public places sit near a window or light.



- Sitting 1 - 2 metres from the speaker is ideal for lip-reading.
- Communication from different rooms or when the speaker is faced away will not be ideal even when using hearing aids. As these will not be able to amplify speech when the sound source is coming through a wall or if not directed towards them.

## **What can I do to help myself follow conversation?**

- Ask other to face you and speak clearly when communicating.
- Don't be afraid to advise people that you communicate with, who are not already aware, that you have a hearing loss and what they can do to help you. Also see overleaf for more advise and communication tactics for others.
- Watch the speaker's lips for additional cues.
- Make sure your eyesight has been recently checked or you are wearing appropriate glasses, so you do not strain your eyes and to help with lip-reading and visual cues for communication.
- You will lip-read better if you are relaxed so try not to become too tense, anxious, tired or stressed, particularly if you have misheard or do not hear something the first time. Ask the person to repeat what they have said and potentially rephrase this to assist you.
- You may find accessories or assistive listening devices useful for helping with your hearing in more challenging listening situations for example for hearing in background noise, the television or phone. Please contact the Audiology department so they can advise you on what devices may be appropriate for you with or without hearing aids.
- If you would like further advice or information on lip-reading classes or materials, please contact the Audiology department.



## What can other people do to help me follow conversations?

- When someone speaks, clues are gained from what is seen as well as what I heard. These clues compliment and reinforce each other, helping the person to piece together the conversation.
- For people with hearing impairment the visual cues of speech become very important.
- Simple actions on your part, such as the below, will help the visual cues of speech to be followed.
- Attract the person's attention before you begin to talk to them so they can hear the entire sentence and not miss the beginning of the conversation. This could be by a tap on the shoulder or saying their name before starting the conversation.
- Keep your face visible and ensure it is well lit to maximise lip-reading. Avoid hiding your lip movements behind your hands or other objects.
- Use natural hand gestures but do not exaggerate them as this can be distracting.
- Do not shout – speak clearly and not too fast. Shouting and over-mouthing will alter the lip pattern and speaking too slowly will alter the natural rhythm of speech.
- Try to make the subject of the conversation as clear as possible.
- Use full sentences rather than short phrases as these can be easier to understand.
- Be patient.
- Repeat or rephrase the sentence if necessary.





- Communicate in the same room and facing the person.  
Sound does not travel as well through walls, at a distance and around corners even when the person is using hearing aids







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## Data Protection Legislation – Privacy Notice

Further information on how we look after your personal information can be found on the Trust Information Governance webpage at [www.porthosp.nhs.uk](http://www.porthosp.nhs.uk) - or alternatively, please speak to a member of staff.

### Consent - What does this mean?

Before any doctor, nurse or therapist examines or treats you they **must have your consent or permission**. Consent ranges from allowing a doctor to take your blood pressure (rolling up your sleeve and presenting your arm is implied consent) to signing a form saying you agree to the treatment or operation. It is important **before giving permission that you understand** what you are agreeing to. **If you do not understand – ask**. More detailed information is available on request.

### How to comment on your treatment

We aim to provide the best possible service and if you have a question or a concern about your treatment then the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are always happy to try to help you get answers you need. You can contact PALS on **0800 917 6039** or

E-mail: [PHT.pals@porthosp.nhs.uk](mailto:PHT.pals@porthosp.nhs.uk) who will contact the department concerned on your behalf.

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