



An Introduction to Hearing Aids: Open Fits

You have decided to be fitted with hearing aids to help with your hearing loss and listening difficulties. The following sections will give you an idea of what to expect, along with some things that will be useful to know before you attend your virtual or face to face hearing aid fitting appointment.

What you can expect from your hearing aid/s

Your hearing aids cannot restore your hearing to how it was before you had a hearing loss but will make the sounds you struggle to hear louder. They should help you to hear speech more clearly so that conversations are easier and less tiring.

They should also make everyday sounds such as the phone ringing and the kettle boiling easier to hear. Most hearing aids are also designed to reduce certain kinds of background noises such as the rumble of traffic which makes noisy situations more comfortable but does not always make it easier to understand speech.

The amount of difficulty you may still have when wearing your hearing aids is dependent on the levels of your hearing, how well your brain processes sound and what kind of listening situations you are in, so will be different for everyone. Difficult listening situations such as a busy restaurant are likely to still be tricky to some extent. You will find that you hear better when sitting close to the person who is talking and when you can see their face.

Getting used to your hearing aid/s

When you first get hearing aids it will take time to adjust to:

- The feeling of having something in your ears
- The difference in how everything will sound
- Cleaning and maintaining your hearing aids
- Putting them in and using any different programmes

The sound can take up to several weeks to get used to and this requires you to wear the hearing aid consistently (the recommendation is at least 6 hours per day but you can build up to this). You should take your hearing aids out at night to give your ears a break from having something in them. You may want to start off by wearing the hearing aids at home just for a few hours per day and build up to wearing them all day and in busy places. On the other hand, you may feel comfortable with wearing



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the hearing aids all day straight away, this is personal choice and what works for one person may not work well for another.

Don't worry if you find the sound from the hearing aid unnatural or overwhelming initially, try to build up your use of the hearing aid gradually which should allow your brain to adjust to the new sound. People often describe the sound as 'tinny' or 'echoey', and it is common to find the sound of your own voice strange! You may find everyday sounds such as a ticking clock or the toilet flushing very loud. This is normal and is because your brain has not heard these sounds at their normal level for some time and needs to adjust.

However, if you do find that sounds are painfully or uncomfortably loud please let us know as we can try and adjust the sound to make it more comfortable for you.

Depending on your level of hearing loss and individual needs you may be offered a face to face appointment or a virtual appointment.

What to Expect from your Virtual Fitting Appointment

First Virtual Appointment

- You will be invited to a virtual appointment that will be performed via secure video link.
- You will be informed of your time slot and sent a text. Follow the link on the text at the agreed time to access the video call.
- The audiologist will set up your aid/s and go through the available settings and programs.
- The audiologist will show you how to care for your aid/s, use the programs, and take the hearing aid/s in and out.
- The audiologist will go through the paperwork you will receive with the hearing aid/s and accessing the service.
- You will be given the opportunity to ask the audiologist questions.

Second Virtual Appointment

- Shortly after you have received the hearing aids you will be offered another video call.
- You will be given the opportunity to practise taking the hearing aid/s in and out and hearing aid maintenance with the audiologist.
- You will be able to ask the audiologist questions and recap on information during the call.
- You will be offered a telephone follow up appointment.

Telephone Follow Up Appointment

- Four to six weeks following your second virtual appointment you will be offered a telephone follow up appointment.



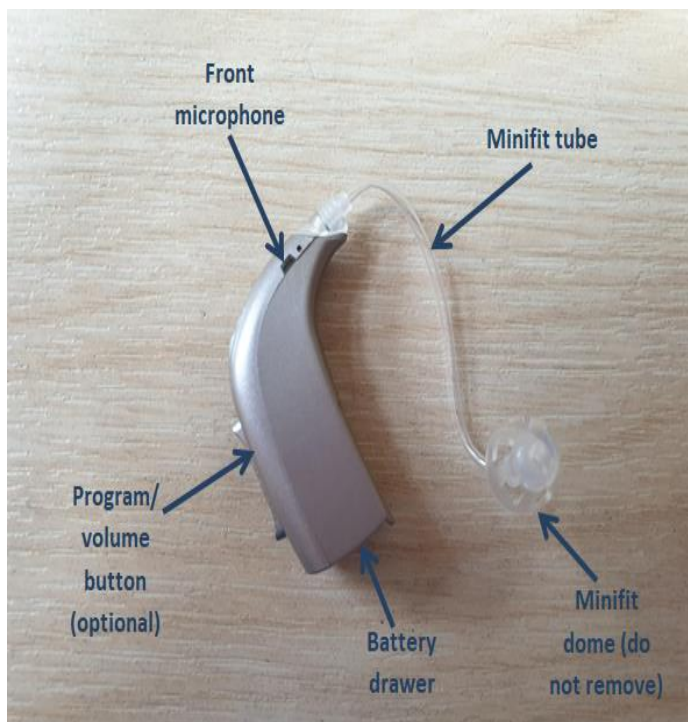
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- Here you will discuss your progress with the audiologist and go over any queries.
- The audiologist may book you a face-to-face appointment if necessary.

Hearing aid functions

Your hearing aid may have different programmes to help you hear better in certain situations, such as the T-loop, a background noise or a music programme. Your audiologist should ask you if you would like additional programmes when you have your hearing aids fitted, but don't worry if you change your mind as they can be added later on. A volume control may also be offered, this is especially useful if your hearing levels go up and down.

Below are some diagrams of the hearing aid you will be fitted with.



Photos taken by Audiology Department, Great Western Hospital

What if you are still struggling to hear after having hearing aids fitted?

Remember, hearing aids take some time to adjust to and will not restore your hearing back to normal. However, we may be able to make adjustments to your hearing aid settings to help maximise the benefit from your hearing aid. If there are specific situations you are still struggling with, such as hearing on the phone then an assistive listening device may help. These may be available through the hearing and vision team or can be bought.

If you are in employment and have a hearing loss, your employer has a duty to make adjustments so you are not put at a disadvantage. You can ask your employer for a workplace assessment where a specialist will visit you at work and make



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recommendations. The workplace assessment and support or equipment recommended can often be paid for by the 'Access to Work Scheme'. See 'where to go for further information' for suggested companies and information.

Communication Tips

Even when you are wearing your hearing aids it is normal to have some hearing difficulties, particularly in noisy situations such as restaurants and cafes. There are a few tactics you can use to help make it easier to understand what people are saying.

Where lip reading is possible:

- Face the person you are talking to. Make sure there is no light behind them (such as a window) as this will make it more difficult to see their face for lip-reading.
- Try to look out for facial expressions and gestures.
- Ask people not to exaggerate their lip movements.

The following tips can be useful for where lip-reading is not always possible, for example, on the phone or when someone is wearing a facemask:

- Try telling people that you have a hearing loss, and let them know what they can do to help you follow what they are saying. Being clear about your communication needs makes the conversation easier for both of you.
- The ideal distance between two people speaking is 3-6 feet (but this will not always be possible due to social distancing).
- Don't be afraid to ask people to repeat what they have said. If you are still struggling, try asking them to rephrase what they have said.
- Ask the person speaking to speak loudly but not to shout.
- You can ask people to slow down when they are speaking to you.
- Ask people to let you know if they are introducing a new topic of conversation.
- Reduce background noise as much as possible.



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Where to go for further information

Audiology Department

Tel: 01793 604065

Email: gwh.audiology.dept@nhs.net

GWH Opening times – may vary during current COVID-19 pandemic

Days	Times
Monday-Thursday	8:00am-6:00pm
Friday	8:00am-5:30pm
Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays	Closed

Other Useful Recourses

C2Hear	Website with videos, for example 'getting to know your hearing aids', 'How to insert your hearing aids' https://c2hearonline.com/
British Tinnitus Association	https://www.tinnitus.org.uk/
Hearing Link	Hearing loss charity https://www.hearinglink.org/
Action on hearing loss	Hearing loss charity www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk
Oticon	This is the company that make our hearing aids, along with the connectline range of products https://www.oticon.com/solutions/accessories/connectline Ask us for a printed leaflet if you do not have internet access
Sarabec	Company selling assistive listening devices www.sarabec.com E: mail@sarabec.co.uk Tel: 01642 929585 Text: 01642 251310
Connevans	Company selling assistive listening devices www.connevans.co.uk E: info@connevans.com Tel: 01737 247571 Text: 01737 644016
Lipreading Classes	If you are interested in attending a lipreading group then you may contact: Libbie Sheppard Tel: 01793771018 Venue: Community Room inside Tesco's on Ocotal Way. (Currently not running due to COVID-19) Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults https://atlipreading.org.uk/?doing_wp_cron=1593680175.1631770133972167968750



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Hearing and vision team	Wiltshire - Opening times for Devizes hearing and vision team centre Tuesday 9:00am -12:00pm Devizes Tel: 01380826480 Mob: 07899067466 Email: hearingandvisionteam@wiltshire.gov.uk Swindon – Opening times Monday-Friday 9am-4pm Tel: 01793463358
Access to Work Scheme	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

Document Control
Division: Planned Care
Department: Audiology
Approved Date: 21 July 2020
Next Review Date: August 2021
Document Number: PC - PIL0170