novus health

NHS

Hearing Health

Wearing a Hearing Aid for the First Time

General Information Leaflet

Get better Stay better

Wearing a Hearing Aid for the First Time

One in five adults in the UK has hearing loss at a level that would benefit from wearing a hearing aid. Even for mild hearing loss, wearing hearing aids can reduce the negative impact hearing loss has on your daily life and considerably slow further deterioration of your hearing.

In addition to hearing better, wearing hearing aids can improve your cognitive function, keep you safer, enhance communication and relationships and boost your overall mental health and wellbeing.

Yet sadly, at least 20% of people who have received hearing aids don't use them, according to a study led by the University of Manchester in 2020. There are multiple reasons for not using a prescribed hearing aid, including stigma, lack of awareness, and difficulty fitting and adjusting the device.

Admittedly, there is a natural adjustment period when wearing hearing aids for the first time. But with advancements in hearing aid technology, comfort and ease of use, we're pleased to report that more people than ever are now using their hearing aids.

With a bit of perseverance and advice from our audiologists at Novus Health, we're supporting our community to get through those first few weeks so that with continued use, you'll feel the benefit and be confident managing your hearing loss.

Are you getting used to a new pair of hearing aids?

In this guide, we'll take you through everything you need to know about wearing a hearing aid for the first time and how a hearing specialist can help you gradually adjust.

What is hearing loss?

'Hearing loss' means you have lost the ability to hear certain sounds.

For example, maybe you can't hear high-pitched tones any longer, such as children's voices or birdsong.

Or, you can't pick out a single voice if there is a lot of background noise.

Hearing loss can happen gradually and may even be noticed by those closest to you before you realise the severity of the hearing loss yourself.

Sometimes, hearing loss is temporary, like a ringing in your ears after a noisy concert - or an annoying whistling that takes time to dissipate. A build-up of wax or an ear infection can cause a temporary reduction in your hearing, but once treated, your hearing will return to normal.

More commonly, hearing loss is permanent, especially with age-related or noise-induced hearing loss, because of degeneration of the inner workings that send sound signals to your brain. Either because of gradual deterioration or damage due to prolonged exposure to loud noise.

However, hearing loss doesn't have to be a fact of life. There are ways you can easily regain clarity in hearing - which is why hearing aids remain so popular.

Why should I wear hearing aids?

A hearing aid specialist can help you find hearing devices fine-tuned to your physical needs and daily expectations.

Your hearing aids will amplify all the sounds they pick up through a built-in microphone. Across a broad frequency range, you can adjust your aids to adapt to various listening environments over time.

Your brain will need practice to re-learn focusing on and filtering noise. However, many first-time users find they can adjust their hearing aids to their needs sooner than expected. Especially when your hearing aids can be fully pre-programmed by your audiologist at your fitting appointment if you prefer.

Hearing aids are designed to:

- Provide comfort in noisy and difficult listening situations
- Improve speech understanding
- Be customisable to your hearing loss because everyone's level of hearing loss and lifestyle is unique to them.

Even mild hearing loss can make it challenging to follow conversations, especially in noisy environments. Wearing hearing aids can help you hear and understand speech more clearly, making it easier to communicate with others. Links have been discovered between hearing loss and an increased risk of dementia. So hearing aids can help you stay mentally sharp by improving your ability to hear and process speech.

Untreated hearing loss is also linked to depression, anxiety, and social isolation. Another benefit of hearing aids is to help you avoid feeling like this and improve your mental health.

As hearing loss can impact your ability to enjoy social activities, hobbies, and other aspects of daily life, wearing hearing aids means you can participate fully in everything you enjoy. Especially with the use of wireless accessories, such as TV Streamers and Multi Mics, which enhance your hearing even further by streaming your favourite TV shows, music and conversations directly to your hearing aids.

Hearing loss tends to be gradual. Because of this, your brain gradually gets used to not hearing as well as it once did. When you hear all these lost sounds again in one go, it can be overwhelming.

When first wearing hearing aids, it's normal if sounds appear unusual to you, even your voice.

The benefits of wearing a hearing aid

It may take some time to get used to wearing hearing aids. Still, regular use and proper care will greatly improve your ability to hear and understand speech.

Hearing aids have many benefits, but most importantly, they will bring you back into the conversation and reduce the frustration of miscommunication. Ultimately, they'll provide you with a renewed quality of life!

Regardless of the degree of hearing loss at stake, the benefits of wearing hearing aids may include:

- Boosting your everyday confidence
- Ensuring you can hear the telephone, doorbell, smoke alarm and other important signals
- Give you back the ability to enjoy days out, and entertainment such as trips to the theatre, cinema, and live music events.

Hearing aids will help you communicate more effectively with family and friends, making conversations easier for both you and them.

Mishearing and asking people to repeat themselves can be frustrating, but with your new hearing aids, you will notice a significant improvement in clearly hearing what people say.

There will also be less need to rely on facial expressions in situations such as a loud restaurant or outdoors where street noise is likely to distract you.

From your hearing assessment onwards, you'll have the opportunity to discuss what you need from your hearing aid with your audiologist.

An experienced hearing aid specialist will help you find a solution that allows you to handle everyday noises in your life and help you adjust to new levels of sound quality.

When should you wear your hearing aid?

Whether you experience temporary or permanent hearing loss, the right time for wearing hearing aids will vary from person to person.

You may feel that in the comfort of your home, for example, you don't find it necessary to wear your hearing aids all the time.

However, it is usually beneficial for you to wear your hearing aids from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to bed. Therefore, you will more quickly adapt to a full range of sounds.

The more frequently hearing aids are worn, the more natural all sounds - including background and foreground - will become.

We recommend taking out your hearing aids before bed and storing them in a safe place that is easy for you to reach in the morning. This way, you will learn to include them as part of your morning routine.

As hearing aids aren't waterproof, you will also need to remove them for activities such as showering and swimming.

If you're unsure when you should wear your aids for the best, make sure to speak with your hearing care provider about optimal use for your level of hearing loss.

What does wearing hearing aids feel like?

As you may expect, the hearing aid adjustment process varies from person to person. However, you're likely to notice a lot of new noises and sounds that you'd usually not pick up.

For example, you may find you are more sensitive to quieter sounds, such as people moving around you, or even the noise of the weather outside.

A typical adjustment issue for many people with hearing aids is growing accustomed to their own voice again. You will likely notice additional amplification to both your breath and your voice at first.

Hearing aids fitted by professionals provide a comfortable experience that you will adapt to in a short time.

Consider wearing hearing aids for the first time to be much like wearing a new pair of shoes or a new pair of glasses. You may feel uneasy at first, but wearing your aids will become second nature before you know it.

Why hearing aid fitting matters

Having a hearing care professional organise a full fitting and hearing aid demonstration is vital for helping you adjust to your new devices.

Hearing professionals will not only help adjust your hearing volume, but will also help you find a product that fits both your ear and your daily lifestyle.

During this time, an expert fitter will explain all your options for controlling your hearing aid settings and will show you how to swiftly adjust settings at a critical time - for example, when you need to pay attention or reduce noise.

What to expect in the first week

From a hearing aid fitting onwards, your experience with these helpful devices may differ compared to others.

However, here are a few common and realistic expectations first-time hearing aid users should prepare for within a week of their hearing aid service.

- Sounds may appear much louder than before.
- There may be a 'tinny' or microphonic tone to the sound at first. This is completely normal.
- Your own voice may appear strange or even echo. This effect usually disappears rapidly.
- Complex, noisy environments may seem overwhelming.
- Your brain needs to re-learn how to filter unnecessary noise.

Give yourself time

Hearing aids, unfortunately, won't provide an overnight fix - it can take up to 8 to 12 weeks to get used to them.

It's common to be still finding your feet during this period. We highly recommend you give your aids time to acclimatise to the background noise you commonly experience.

We understand that frustration during the adoption period is hard. But patience is key. You will notice small changes from the outset - and you will eventually be fully accustomed to your hearing aids, getting the most out of them.

Here are some handy tips to try if you're getting used to the hearing aid adjustment process for the first time.

Avoid noisy situations at first

Try practising with your hearing aid at home. Putting yourself in extremely noisy and busy places initially can be too overwhelming for both the user and the device.

We recommend getting used to your hearing aids in quieter and more comfortable places before advancing to more noisy situations.

Trying hearing aids at home provides you with the easiest listening situation - and is a great place to try listening to sounds and voices familiar to you.

Try conversations with one or two people, to begin with, while they are facing you and speaking clearly. Once you are comfortable with this, it'll be easier to tackle harder hearing situations and adapt to louder unwanted sounds.

It is also a good idea to acclimate to your hearing aids by watching television or listening to music. This will help you get used to different sounds and understand how your hearing aids pick them up.

In fact, one of the more common reasons people with age-related hearing loss invest in hearing aids, for example, is to hear their entertainment clearer!

Adapt to your surroundings

Once you are used to wearing your hearing aids at home and are getting more comfortable with them, it'll be easier for you to adapt to noisier places, such as busy restaurants.

You can consider some environmental adaptations to make it easier for you in different situations.

Here are some tips for using hearing aids in a busy restaurant:

1. Choose a seat away from loud noises, such as kitchens or speakers.
2. Adjust the volume and settings on your hearing aids to suit the environment. Experienced audiologists can help you if you need help with additional tuning.
3. If possible, request a quieter table or ask the server to seat you in a quieter area of the restaurant.
4. Use visual cues, such as lip reading or watching the speaker's face, to help understand the conversation.
5. If you are having trouble hearing, inform the person you are speaking with and request that they repeat themselves or speak slowly and clearly.
6. Consider using wireless accessories such as a Multi Mic or Micro Mic. Both options will stream the conversation you want to hear directly to your hearing aids.

It may take some time to get used to your hearing aids in a busy restaurant environment. Be patient with yourself and communicate with your audiologist about any challenges you are facing.

With practice, you will be able to better hear and understand conversations in a variety of settings.

How family and friends can help

Friends and family can be particularly helpful during the adjustment period. Let people know you are adjusting to your new device and ask them to work with you as you get used to it.

Simple requests - such as asking someone to face you and speak clearly - will really help you communicate with people at first.

If you have loved ones who are getting used to hearing aids for the first time, here are a few ways you may be able to support them.

1. Be patient and understanding. It can take time for someone to get used to wearing hearing aids and to learn how to use them effectively.
2. Offer to help the person learn how to use and care for their hearing aids. This can include showing them how to insert and remove the devices, change the batteries, and clean and maintain them.
3. Encourage hearing aid wearers to use their fittings as much as possible, even if they initially find them uncomfortable. The more they wear the devices, the more they will get used to them - and the benefits will increase.
4. Finally, be a good listener. Pay attention to a hearing aid wearer and make an effort to communicate clearly and effectively. This can help ensure that they can hear and understand what is being said, which can be especially important when they first learn to use their hearing aids.

What to expect in the first 30 days

- Your brain will begin to normalise your hearing volume.
- Sounds of speech and occasional noise should seem more balanced and even.
- The artificial tone of sounds you can hear should begin to fade. You'll start to experience greater clarity, too.
- Your voice will usually sound natural and clear to you without 'getting in the way'.
- Small groups and quiet restaurants should be manageable, although noisier places may still cause some difficulties.

What to expect in the first three months

- Not only should sounds be comfortable at this stage, you may even be ready for a little more volume.
- Your brain should now be used to the sound of the hearing aids, and everyday noise should feel normal to you when wearing the instruments.
- Your own voice should have faded into the background.
- Small gatherings and more challenging environments should be more accessible to you now. It is worth remembering that even people without any hearing loss can mishear when there are a lot of voices or loud music.

Common questions and concerns about wearing a hearing aid

Using electronic devices to hear easier may seem daunting or even odd at first. Here are some common questions you may personally wish to ask - with answers from an experienced hearing aid specialist.

How often should I clean my hearing aids?

No specific schedule works for everyone, but you can extend a hearing aid's life and improve its performance by developing and maintaining a daily cleaning regime. For example, earwax build-up is one of the most common causes of hearing aid malfunction.

It is important to clean your hearing aids regularly to remove earwax and other debris that can cause them to malfunction or become less effective.

Cleaning them before going to bed, for instance, is the most effective way to establish a routine.

Your hearing specialist will help advise you on a proper cleaning schedule that suits your routine and the style of hearing aids you use.

How often should I change my hearing aid tubes?

We recommend changing your hearing aid tubes every three to six months. This ensures no blockages or kinks can stop sounds from travelling through.

How often should I change my hearing aid batteries?

Your hearing aids' batteries should need changing about once a week, depending on the brand and model. Turning off your hearing aids when you aren't using them by opening the battery drawer will help your batteries last longer. What's more, it will help cut down on the cost of batteries long-term.

Should you wear a hearing aid all day?

You should ideally wear hearing aids most of the day, even when you're only likely to pick up quieter sounds. Doing so can help you adjust easier to wearing your hearing aids.

However, do make sure to remove your hearing aids before you go to sleep, before showering, bathing or swimming, or if you're heading somewhere extremely loud or dangerously noisy.

How do I book an appointment with an audiologist?

If you've had hearing aids fitted by Novus Health, you can contact us by calling **01924 898784**. Or contact us through our website **novushealth.co.uk/contact-us**

How long does it take to get used to wearing a hearing aid?

It usually takes around 8 to 12 weeks to adjust your hearing aids. During this time, you will notice that you get more and more used to sounds until - eventually - you're fully acclimated.

However, people with hearing loss adjust to their aids at different speeds. Keep an open mind, and always discuss expectations with your hearing specialist.

Can hearing aids help with different types of hearing loss?

Regardless of the type of hearing loss you may be adjusting to, there are different types of hearing aids (and settings) to suit your needs.

For example, if you have difficulty hearing high-frequency sounds, your audiologist will help you find the right technology that attends to this need.

Conclusion

Millions of people with varying degrees of hearing loss find that hearing aids transform their quality of life for the better.

Getting fitted for hearing aids for the first time may feel scary. It's why it's so important to reach out to a specialist - such as those at Novus Health - who can help you regain confidence in your hearing.

With ongoing care and support, we'll not only help you find the right fit, but help you adjust to a new life of clearer hearing along the way.

Our Vision

"To be recognised for our commitment to improving health care services for the local community, developing our range of locally accessed services and excelling in quality, safety and patient experience"

This vision is underpinned by a series of more specific strategic aims

- Improving the safety and clinical quality of our services
- Improving the experience for the patients that we treat, as well as their carers and families
- Developing the range of services we provide and developing the integration of services between primary and secondary care
- Delivering services closer to peoples' homes, with continually improved access to treatment times
- Developing our organisation and workforce
- Continually improving the financial stability of the organisation to enable us to re-invest in new services
- Supporting local GP networks to develop and deliver services

Patients are referred to Novus Health by their GPs using the 'e-Referral' system.

Contact us

If you have any comments, complaints or just want to know more about the services we provide, please contact us on 01924 898784.