



Caring for Hearing Aids

Problems with hearing aids are often as a result of earwax which enters the aid. This is said to count for 80 per cent of hearing aid repairs (Oliveira 1997).

If the inlet of the aid is blocked by earwax, the volume may be reduced or even cut-off all together and a high pitched whistling noise may occur.

Some in-the-ear (ITE) hearing aids have a tiny white ring (wax filter), only a few tenths of a millimetre wide to help prevent this from happening, which fits into the microphone inlet. If, however they are not fitted correctly they can fall into the ear canal causing irritation and may need to be removed by a doctor or nurse.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CARE FOR MY HEARING AID?

- Take your hearing aid out when you go to bed.
- Keep the mechanical part of the aid away from water, heat, hairspray or body sprays (allow the product to dry first before inserting the hearing aid)
- Turn the hearing aid off when not in use to save battery power
- Clean the hearing aid using a soft cloth and remove any accumulated earwax on the ear mould daily.

WHY DOES MY HEARING AID WHISTLE?

- This problem can be caused by the following:-
- The hearing aid mould may not be inserted correctly
- If the ear mould has been in use for many years, it may no longer be creating a good seal in the ear entrance
- The ear canal may be blocked or contain excess wax
- The ear may be infected and the canal may be blocked with infective discharge
- The hearing aid may be faulty.

CAN I CLEAN THE EAR MOULD?

In-the-ear aids should generally be cleaned using a soft cloth because the electronic part is integrated into the shell. Some in-the-ear aids come with a special wire loop and/or brush which can be used to clean them. If your aid comes with a wire loop or brush, ask your audiologist or hearing aid dispenser to show you how to use them so that you do not damage the aid in the process of cleaning it.

Behind-the-ear aids have a mould and tubing that can be disconnected (together) from the hearing aid. They can then be washed in warm soapy water and rinsed under a running tap. This is especially important to do if you notice the tubing is blocked. Shake the mould and tubing to remove excess water. Allow the mould and tubing to dry completely before reattaching it to the hearing aid. This will ensure that no moisture enters the electronic part of the hearing aid. To reattach the ear mould to the hearing aid, make sure the curve of the ear mould matches the curve of the instrument and then attach the tubing.

What should I do if problems persist?

You should consult your audiologist or hearing aid centre if:-

- the ear mould causes pain or discomfort;
- earwax cannot be cleared from the ear mould; or
- the hearing aid whistles even after it has been cleaned and wax is not clogging the opening.

References

Oliveira RJ. (1997) 'The Active Ear Canal', *J Am Acad Audiology*. 8: 401 - 410

FURTHER INFORMATION

If any of your questions concerning your hearing aids have not been answered by reading this information sheet, contact the Deafness Research UK Information Service for further assistance. Our Information team will either answer your enquiry directly or refer it to one of our scientific or medical advisers.

Open: 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Monday to Friday (a message can be left at other times).

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Textphone: 020 7915 1412

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Deafness Research UK is the only national medical research charity dedicated to helping people with deafness, tinnitus or other hearing problems.

Scientists are now predicting that within the next ten to fifteen years there could be a cure for some forms of deafness and much more effective treatments for tinnitus. Deafness Research UK is at the forefront of this work.

You can support us by making a donation or joining the Deafness Research UK League of Friends. For more information call us on 0207 833 1733 or write to:

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