

# Living with Hearing Devices



## Get off to a flying start

Now that you have your new hearing instruments, and your Hearing Care Professional has explained how they work and what to expect, you can use this guide to help you adjust to wearing them every day. Family and friends should read it too for valuable tips on how to help.

The key to succeeding with hearing instruments is **patience**, **practice** and **positive thinking**. Around the

house you will hear a lot more sounds - from the ticking of a clock and hum of the refrigerator to the churning of a washing machine. Outside, the traffic will seem louder. In the supermarket it will sound much busier. This can be somewhat overwhelming at first, but this is just a passing phase.



## Know what is in store

Getting used to hearing instruments can take anywhere from just a few hours, a few days to a few months, depending on your hearing loss, the type of instrument you are wearing, and your ability to adapt. But you will be amazed at how much can be achieved in a short space of time if you are willing to try.

It is important to understand that no matter how advanced your instruments are, they will never be able to completely restore your hearing.

What you can expect is to hear and understand much more in a wide variety of situations. You will perform better at work or when volunteering; socializing will become more enjoyable, you will feel more confident, and you might



even get more energy to enjoy the good things in life.

Your family and friends will certainly notice the difference!

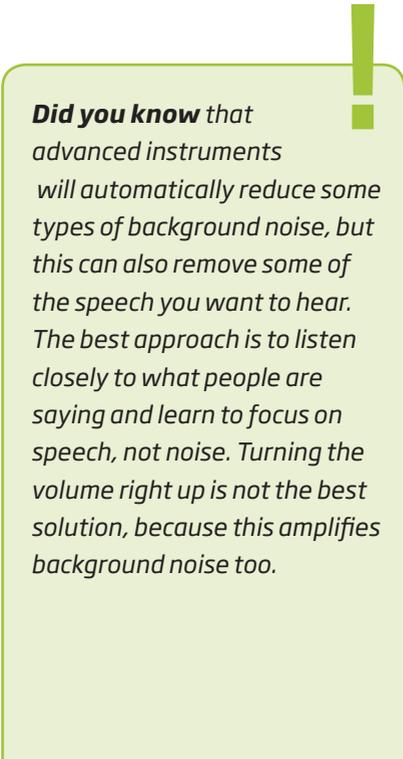
***Did you know*** that in crowded situations with a lot of background noise, even people with normal hearing can have difficulty keeping up!

# Learning to hear again

---

Hearing instruments can make a very positive difference to your life. However, they are not like glasses, which restore your vision the moment you put them on. Initially, certain sounds might seem rather loud - even strange. This is because the brain forgets what it was like to be able to hear those sounds, and it has to learn how to process them again.

You will hear voices and sounds that you may not have heard for a long time. First, your brain has to identify these sounds. Then it has to relearn to focus on the ones that are important and filter out the rest. As you regain the ability to master this task, you will discover that the more you use your instruments, the less you will want to be without them!



***Did you know that advanced instruments will automatically reduce some types of background noise, but this can also remove some of the speech you want to hear. The best approach is to listen closely to what people are saying and learn to focus on speech, not noise. Turning the volume right up is not the best solution, because this amplifies background noise too.***

## Train your brain

Because the brain registers so many new sounds, the initial adjustment period can be quite tiring. It is a bit like training a muscle that has not been used for a long time. What a difference it makes when you regain that lost strength!

After wearing your instruments for a couple of weeks, you may need an appointment with your Hearing Care Professional for adjustments. Once these have been made you will be able to practise much more and get the very best out of them on a daily basis.

# What you need to know when getting started

---

At first, everything may seem too loud. This is normal and has nothing to do with the volume being set too high. The best approach is to wear your instruments for as long as possible during the first few days in the quiet of your home, and avoid noisy situations until your brain has had time to adjust.

## Keep things simple at first

If you have program buttons and volume controls, wait until you are more experienced before experimenting with them. Rely on the fully automatic hearing instrument to keep things comfortable.

## A little later

When you feel ready to try out the various listening programs, you will get even more out of wearing your instruments.

## Good tips for a gentle start:

- *Start by wearing your instruments for most of the day.*
- *Use them in quiet situations, and in one-on-one conversations in your living room.*
- *Listen to the radio or television.*
- *Use them in noisier environments such as a busy road and your local supermarket.*
- *Use the telephone.*
- *Finally, use them with friends or family at home and at your favourite restaurant. This is likely to be the most challenging scenario. At first you may not be able to hear everything that people are saying, but with time this gets easier.*

## Your initial experiences

---

### Things that might surprise you

Knowing what to expect is the first step to being happy with your instruments. The more severe your hearing loss is, the more likely you are to be overwhelmed by all the new sounds, and their apparent volume. But the more open and natural-sounding your instrument is - for example a RITE (Receiver-in-the-Ear) style with an open connection to the ear - the easier you will find the adaptation process.

### Be prepared for new experiences

Things might sound strange at first, but with time you will get used to your new way of hearing. Here are some examples of what to expect:

- *Hearing yourself chewing will sound strange at first.*
- *Your refrigerator will hum more loudly!*
- *The crinkle of newspaper pages being turned will sound sharper.*
- *Your car will sound different now that you can hear the engine clearly.*
- *Traffic noise will sound louder.*

### Sounds you might enjoy rediscovering

- *Birds singing.*
- *The echo of your own footsteps.*
- *Children laughing.*
- *The sound of stringed instruments.*
- *Rustling of leaves on trees.*
- *Rain against your window.*

- *Your alarm clock, doorbell or phone ringing might make you jump the first time you hear them.*
- *Flushing your toilet might sound like Niagara Falls!*

# The advantages of keeping a diary

---

Adapting to hearing instruments may involve a certain amount of adjustments. This usually happens over a couple of sessions, after you have tried the instruments out in different environments. We recommend keeping a diary to note down your experiences after you have had time to acclimatize.

## Loudness

Listen to everyday sounds in both noisy and quiet conditions. Listen to soft sounds, like leaves rustling or people talking at a distance. Listen to loud or sudden loud sounds, such as a door slamming, toilet flushing, children crying or live music. Make notes on the loudness - is it acceptable?

## Changes in your sound environment

Observe typical changes in your sound environment, such as entering a shop from a noisy street or a person addressing you in a crowd. Make notes on how well your instruments adjust to your environment.

## Sound quality

Listen to high-pitched sounds (e.g. violins, birdsong and children's voices) and low pitched sounds (e.g. male voices or a bass guitar). Try to describe the quality of each sound so that adjustments can be made if necessary.



# Communication tips for the whole family



Given the chance, family, friends and colleagues can do a lot to help you improve your hearing. That is why it is important to let them know about your instruments, and to tell them what they need to do to make communicating easier.

## Talk face to face

- *Move closer and sit or stand where your face is well lit to make your facial expressions and lips easy to read.*
- *Try not to talk while chewing or smoking.*
- *Never hide behind a newspaper or lean your cheek or chin on your hand while talking.*

## Speak at a natural pace

- *Try not to talk too fast.*
- *If your companion has difficulty understanding you, try re-phrasing the sentence rather than just repeating yourself.*
- *In group situations, try not to interrupt each other.*

## Reduce background noise

- *Avoid noisy doorways and windows; if you cannot close them, find somewhere quieter to talk.*
- *Try to reduce background noise i.e. turn down the stereo or TV.*

## Good advice for you

Before going to the cinema or theatre, call in advance to check whether they provide assistive listening devices (systems that make it easier to listen with hearing instruments). When booking restaurants, try to get the quietest seats. When attending seminars, try to arrive early and sit at the front. And do not hesitate to ask the presenters to use a microphone.

## Looking after your hearing instruments

---

Hearing instruments have to cope with everything from moisture, heat, perspiration and earwax to hair care products. To keep them in good condition, follow the guidelines below.

- *Always keep your instruments clean and dry.*
- *To preserve battery life when not in use, open the battery door*
- *Make a habit of cleaning your hearing instruments every day, - never using household cleaning fluids, oil or water. Use a dry cloth and a brush.*

- *At night, you might store your instruments in the special drying kit (available from your Hearing Care Professional).*
- *Always check to make sure you have removed your instruments before swimming, showering or applying hairspray.*

How often you need to change batteries will depend on model, type and daily usage. Ask your Hearing Care Professional what to expect. Many instruments send out a soft beeping signal to indicate that the battery is running low.



## Follow-up care

---

Your hearing instruments should never feel too tight or too loose, but comfortable. If at any time they should cause discomfort or irritation, contact your Hearing Care Professional for assistance.

Be sure to book regular follow-up visits so your Hearing Care Professional can monitor your progress, and remember to log any questions or concerns in your diary. Remember also that the key to success can be described with just four words: **patience, practice and positive thinking!**





## People First

People First is our promise  
to empower people  
to communicate freely,  
interact naturally and  
participate actively

Hearing Care Professional:

906.00.945.00 / 08.10