
*Leading Health Care
In The 21st Century*



Your VA Hearing Aid



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Adjusting to a new hearing aid can be a confusing and difficult experience. This booklet offers some suggestions to help you adjust to your new hearing aid.

Please keep this booklet for future use.

Contact Information

If you have questions about your hearing aid, please contact the VA Audiology Clinic nearest you:

Albany VA Medical Center 113 Holland Avenue Albany, NY 12208	(518) 626-5820
Bath VA Medical Center Bath, NY 14810	(607) 664-4419 (607) 664-4418
Canandaigua VA Medical Center 400 Fort Hill Avenue Canandaigua, NY 14424	(585) 393-7891
Rochester VA Outpatient Clinic 465 Westfall Road Rochester, NY 14620	(585) 241-2010
Syracuse VA Medical Center 800 Irving Avenue Syracuse, NY 13210	(315) 477-4525
VA Western New York Healthcare System at Buffalo 3495 Bailey Avenue Buffalo, NY 14215	(716) 862-6095



What is a Hearing Aid?

A hearing aid is similar to a miniature public address system. They include a:

- Microphone - picks up the sound.
- Amplifier - increases the loudness of the sound.
- Receiver - reproduces the sound and transmits it into your ear.
- Battery - the power supply of the hearing aid.

Different types of hearing aids are made to accommodate different types of hearing loss. Custom hearing aids are not appropriate for some severe forms of hearing loss, as they may not have enough volume to help the individual.



Loan Basis

As an eligible VA patient, you may be entitled to a hearing aid(s). These are given to patients on an “indefinite loan” basis.

Please do not throw out your old or broken hearing aids. Any hearing aids you no longer use should be returned to the Audiology Clinic nearest you. Returned hearing aids are sent to the Denver Distribution Center where they are recycled for parts and repairs.

Hearing Loss and Its Effects

It is common for adults to have some hearing loss. The older we get, the poorer our hearing becomes. Hearing loss usually begins gradually with certain words sounding soft, muffled and/or distorted. This change often makes listening a difficult task, especially in noisy areas.

People with hearing loss often feel that they can hear fine but cannot understand what is being said. In most cases, people with hearing loss have more difficulty hearing high pitch sounds. The consonants s, z, f, v, sh, and th, are difficult to hear if you have high pitch hearing loss.

If a person hears low pitches normally, he/she usually hears vowel sounds normally. This is why many people feel that they can hear fine. But when a person only hears vowel sounds, they are not hearing enough of the word to understand it. This makes speech sound like it is being mumbled.

Hearing aids and speechreading may be able to help you with this type of hearing loss. These tools will help you understand conversations better. Unfortunately, hearing aids can't make us hear as well as when we were younger but they do improve our hearing and allow us to hear more than we could before using them.



Adjusting to a Hearing Aid

How quickly you adjust to your hearing aid will depend on how often you wear it. If you wear your hearing aid every day, you will get used to it much faster.

If you expect your hearing aid will help you understand all conversation, you will be disappointed. Generally, the older we get, the more difficulty we have understanding conversations. With a hearing loss, this gets even worse.

- Hearing aids are not a cure for hearing loss.
 - Hearing aids do not correct your hearing or return it to normal. If this happened, most people would not be able to tolerate the volume.
- Hearing aids will not block out background noise.
 - It is not possible for an electronic device or our brain to amplify one person's voice and block out other voices or sounds.
 - When you begin wearing a hearing aid(s), you will notice an increase in the noise levels around you. This noise has probably always been there but with your hearing loss, you probably were not noticing the background noise before.
 - It will take time for you to get used to hearing the louder sounds around you.
- Speechreading is necessary.
 - If you only rely on hearing, you may not be able to understand all conversation. The poorer your hearing becomes, the greater difficulty you will have understanding conversation.
 - To improve your ability to understand conversation, you must use your eyes when listening. Watch the face of the person who is speaking.
 - Even when wearing hearing aids, we must rely on speechreading.



Speechreading - What Your Friends and Family Can Do to Help

- Do not speak unless you are in the same room with the listener.
- Get the person's attention before you begin to speak to him/her. If necessary, call the person's name or touch him/her lightly to attract their attention.
- Be sure the listener can see your face clearly. Do not stand in front of a light or a window. The glare will make it difficult for him/her to see your face.
- Do not turn or walk away while speaking.
- Do not shout. Speak at a normal volume. Shouting distorts speech and makes it harder to understand.
- Speak at a normal rate. Don't speak too fast. The faster you talk, the harder it is to understand.
- Speak clearly. Do not exaggerate movements of your mouth. This will also distort speech.
- Do not speak directly into the listener's ear.
- If the listener does not understand what you have said, rephrase the statement rather than simply repeating it.
- Be patient. Try not to get upset if you have to repeat things a lot. Hearing fluctuates with days, times and moods.
- Talk in a quiet area. The noisier the room, the more difficulty we all have following a conversation.



Inserting Your Hearing Aid

Your hearing aid(s) should be **OFF**.

Hold the hearing aid along the side using your thumb and forefinger.

For most in-the-ear hearing aids, insert with the volume control at the bottom.

For canal style hearing aids, insert it with the volume control at the top. The canal should face away from your hand.

For over-the-ear hearing aids, insert the earmold first and then place the aid on top of ear.

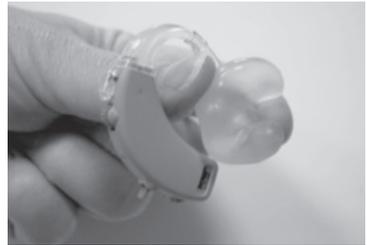
Insert the **CANAL** portion of the hearing aid into ear.

It may be easier to insert if you pull up and back on your ear with the opposite hand. **ROTATE** the hearing aid back-and-forth until it rests **FLATLY** in your ear.

Sometimes using a mirror is helpful.

To turn your hearing aid **ON** or to **INCREASE** the volume, place your forefinger on the volume control.

Using slight pressure turn the knob forward or towards your nose.



Removing Your Hearing Aid

Shut your hearing aid off. This will stop it from whistling.

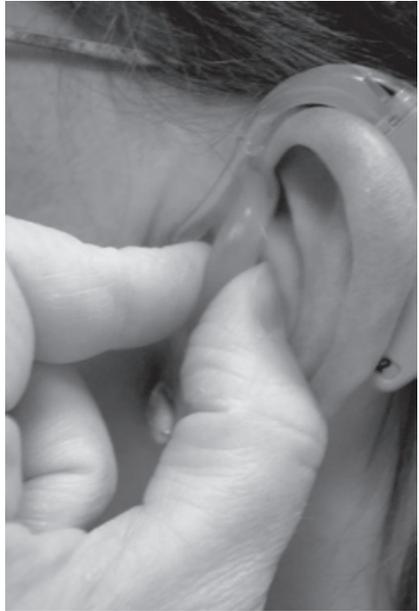
Using your forefinger, apply slight pressure and turn it backwards.

To take hold of the hearing aid, push down on earlobe with the thumb to create a space for your thumb. Grab with your forefinger at the top and your thumb at the bottom of the hearing aid.

To remove the hearing aid, pull it straight out. Do not pull on the battery door or the volume wheel. This can damage the faceplate.



In-the-Ear



Behind-the-Ear

Remove this type of hearing aid by grabbing the earmold - not the tubing.



Hearing Aid Care/Daily Care

If your hearing aid is not kept clean, it will require more frequent repairs.

- Keep your hearing aid clean at all times.
 - When handling your hearing aid, be sure your hands are clean.
 - Before going to bed at night, clean your hearing aid(s).
 - If there is any earwax or other debris on the hearing aid or earmold, wipe it with a soft, dry tissue.
 - A wax-loop and wax-brush are provided for cleaning the canal portion of your hearing aid. You should use these every day. Clean the top portion only. Do not insert anything (including the cleaning tools) into the hearing aid.



Example of wax-loop and one type of brush.



Clean canal portion of the hearing aid.



Put hearing aid(s) in case with battery compartment kept open. Keep case closed.

- Wax guards
 - Spring/Coil Wax Guard System - Do not put wax loop or anything else inside the canal of hearing aid.
 - Other _____
- When you are not using your hearing aid(s), store in the case with the battery compartment open.
 - Do not store your hearing aid(s) in your pocket. You may lose it/them.



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- **Do not drop your hearing aid.**
 - Insert and remove your hearing aid(s) over a carpeted area. If you do not have carpeting, insert your hearing aid(s) while sitting on a bed. If you choose to insert your hearing aid(s) over a table, place a bath towel on the table before caring for the hearing aid(s).
 - **Protect your hearing aid from harsh substances.**
 - Do not wear your hearing aid(s) while using hair spray, spray paint, or any other sticky sprays. This will clog the microphone.
 - **Do not use hearing aid(s) while using noisy machinery.**
 - Do not wear your hearing aid(s) when you are using a lawnmower, power tool, chainsaw, tractor, and or shotgun/rifle.
 - Remove the hearing aids and hearing protection (earplugs/ear muffs) should be worn. Loud noise can cause your hearing loss to worsen.
 - **If you have an ear infection with ear discharge, do not wear your hearing aid(s).**
 - Contact your physician for medical treatment.
 - **Never take your hearing aid(s) apart.**
 - If your hearing aid(s) stop working, please refer to the troubleshooting guide on page 19.
 - Never grind or poke holes in your hearing aid.
 - **If your hearing aid(s) are causing you pain/soreness:**
 - Stop wearing your hearing aid.
 - Call Audiology for an appointment.
 - Start wearing your hearing aid(s) again the day before your appointment. This will help us see where you are experiencing soreness.



Box Set-Up

1. PRINT LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL	
2. PRINT ADDRESS (Street No., City, State, and ZIP Code)	
3. PRINT LAST FOUR DIGITS OF YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	
4. THIS ADDRESS IS:	5. DATE
<input type="checkbox"/> PERMANENT <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY	
Please send a six month supply of batteries for the following hearing aids:	
TRADE NAME	
MODEL	
SERIAL NUMBER(S)	
NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY HEARING AID(S) USED	
BATTERY SIZE	
ACCESSORIES	
REMARKS	
<i>NOTE: If privacy is desired, insert in envelope and mail to addressee.</i>	

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REQUEST FOR HEARING AID BATTERIES & ACCESSORIES

About one to four weeks after receiving your first VA hearing aid(s), you will receive a box from the DDC (Denver Distribution Center). It will contain:

- A six month supply of hearing aid batteries
- Sponge
- Tape
- Address label
- Battery order card
- Repair order card

Save the box for future use.

If you are receiving a replacement hearing aid, you will NOT receive a new hearing aid set-up kit unless you request it.

If you already have had a VA hearing aid, you will not receive a supply of batteries unless your new hearing aid uses different size batteries than your old hearing aid.



Hearing Aid Batteries



A small battery is the power source for your hearing aid. These batteries require replacement every one to three weeks. How often you change your batteries varies with your degree of hearing loss, the number of hours you wear your hearing aid(s), and the type/size of the battery.

- Keep batteries out of reach of children, pets, or confused individuals.
- Do not put batteries in your ear, nose, or mouth. Always throw away old batteries.
- Individuals have mistaken these small batteries for medication. Please check your medication before swallowing.
- If you swallow a battery, contact your physician or call the National Button Battery Ingestion Hotline (202) 625-3333 immediately!
- Store batteries in a cool/dry place.
- Do not store zinc-air batteries in a refrigerator.
- When replacing the battery, do not force the battery door closed. Check to make sure the battery is the correct size and in the right way.



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- When your hearing aid is not in use, open the battery compartment. This will save battery power and allow the hearing aid to dry overnight.
 - Keep the “tab” on zinc-air batteries until you are ready to use them.
 - Extra batteries should be carried in a cloth or leather pouch. Do not carry batteries loosely with other metal objects (change, keys, etc). If the metal objects rub together, it could kill the battery.
 - If you are not wearing your hearing aid(s) for one week or longer, remove the batteries. Battery acid will eventually leak, causing damage to your hearing aid(s).
 - Never dispose of batteries in a fire. They may explode.



Batteries for Eligible Outpatients

When you only have four batteries left, it is time to order more.

You can order your hearing aid batteries by completing one of the following:

1. Complete a “Veteran’s Request for Hearing Aid Batteries” form. Put a stamp on it and mail it. You will receive your batteries in about two to three weeks. One order card is sent with each shipment of batteries.
2. E-mail the DDC

ddc.csd@mail.va.gov

Be sure to include your name, address, hearing aid information, and battery size on your request.

3. If you cannot find your “Battery Request Card,” and you do not have e-mail, you can also use the form on page 13. Complete the form, and mail it in an envelope.



Hearing Aid Repairs for Eligible Outpatients - During the Warranty Period

Before calling to request an appointment, please check the troubleshooting guide in this booklet.

Your hearing aid repairs are covered under warranty from today until _____, please call Audiology for an appointment for repairs.

If no one is able to answer your call, please leave a message. Calls will be returned as soon as possible.

For clinic phone numbers, please refer to page 2 in the front of this booklet.



Hearing Aid Repairs for Eligible Outpatients - After the Warranty Period

Your hearing aid warranty will expire on: _____. After this date, you will need to mail your hearing aid to the DDC for repairs.

- Complete the “Veteran’s Request for Hearing Aid Repairs, Cords, or Tubing” form (page 25) and mail it to the DDC.
- When mailing your hearing aid:
 - Complete the repair card
 - Remove the battery and close the battery compartment
 - Wrap the hearing aid in a sponge
 - Make sure that the repair card is inside the box

If you have a behind-the-ear or body aid, remove the earmold before mailing.

If you have a CROS or BICROS hearing aid, mail both sides of the hearing aid.

After your hearing aid is repaired, it will be mailed back to you. Repairs usually take four to six weeks. One repair card will be sent back with your hearing aid.



Troubleshooting Guide

Eventually, all electronic devices (including hearing aids) malfunction. Before sending your hearing aid for repairs, try the following:

➤ **If your hearing aid is dead or weak**

Possible Cause	What to Do
Dead battery	Change the battery
Earwax blocking the opening	Using a dry tissue, wipe off wax or use wax remover tool
Wax guard plugged	If your hearing aid uses a wax guard, change it
Defective hearing aid	Contact Audiology

➤ **Intermittent or popping noises**

Possible Cause	What to Do
Low or defective battery	Change the battery
Defective hearing aid	Contact Audiology

➤ **Whistling or feedback**

Possible Cause	What to Do
Volume is too high	Adjust volume to no more than 2/3 to 3/4 on
Earwax in ear canal	Clean ears/contact Audiology for treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do NOT use Q-tips. They push earwax deeper into the canal.• Do NOT use anything smaller than your elbow in your ear.
Defective hearing aid	Contact Audiology



How to Adjust Your Hearing Aid In Noise

Some people assume once they turn their hearing aid on in the morning, it doesn't need to be adjusted again. This is not always the case. You may find you need to adjust the volume on your hearing aid several times throughout the day. This often depends upon the noise levels of various situations. Generally, in noisier areas, the volume should be turned down.

Normal volume control settings are:

QUIET - 1/2 on or between 1/3 to 2/3 on. This is the normal setting for “around the house.”

NOISE - 1/4 on. Hearing aids should be turned down in restaurants, malls, crowds, and when you are riding/driving in a vehicle moving at speeds 55 mph or higher.

Wear your hearing aid while you are awake.

**The more often you wear your hearing aid(s),
the quicker you will adjust to them.**

Hearing aid(s) should be worn every day.



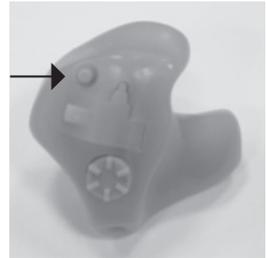
Adjusting Your Hearing Aid(s) in Noisy Situations

Some hearing aids allow for a change in the acoustics of the hearing aid with the use of a small button or switch. This is used to adjust the hearing aid in noisy situations or for use with the telephone.

Hearing aids can be adjusted by a button or toggle switch.
Your hearing aid uses a _____.

_____ Memory Button

to adjust your hearing aid you will need to push a small button near the top portion of the hearing aid.



_____ Quiet (around the house)

_____ Noise (restaurants, malls, parties, crowds, riding/driving in a vehicle moving at speeds 55 mph or higher)

_____ Other: _____

Hearing aid settings are called “memories.” If you find that you do not like having separate memories, call Audiology for an appointment. They will turn the memories “off.” Opening the battery door will automatically reset the hearing aid to “memory 1.”

_____ Toggle Switch

With switch _____ = normal listening

Move switch _____ = to decrease noise in noisy rooms such as restaurants. Do not wear in this mode while driving.

_____ Other: _____



Telephone Use

Hold the telephone receiver close to your ear - without touching the hearing aid.

If your hearing aid “whistles,” tilt the telephone receiver away from the ear until the whistling stops.

Experiment with the position of the telephone to find your hearing aid’s “hot spot.”



Behind-the-ear style hearing aid

Rest the receiver of the telephone above your ear. Change the on/off switch to the middle position/“T”



In-the-ear style hearing aid

Rest the receiver of the telephone on the top portion of your ear.

With any style hearing aid, it may be necessary to:

- Increase the volume control of the hearing aid after turning it to “T”
- Be sure you are holding the telephone at the angle pictured above
- Turn the volume back down before changing your hearing aid back “on”

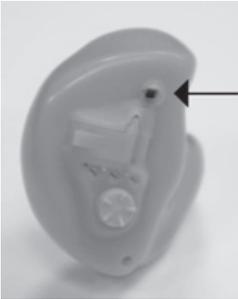


Telecoil Switch

If your hearing aid is equipped with a telecoil switch, before answering the telephone, slide the switch to the “T” position. In this position, your hearing aid will pick up sound directly from the telephone receiver. It will not amplify room noises. This may make it easier for you to understand a telephone conversation.

On your _____ hearing aid, slide it _____ to activate the telephone switch.

When you are finished with the telephone, you must slide the switch back to its original position: _____



The telecoil switch on an in-the-ear hearing aid is often located near the top.

On behind-the-ear hearing aids, the telecoil switch is usually located in the center of the on and off switch.



Sometimes, the telecoil switch must be activated to use some sound systems that have been installed in churches, theaters, meeting rooms, and buildings. Since the passage of the “American’s with Disabilities Act,” many urban areas have begun using these types of systems.



Notes



LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL		DATE OF BIRTH	DATE
SOCIAL SECURITY NO.		DEVICE INFORMATION	
ADDRESS <i>(Street No., City, State and Zip Code)</i>		MAKE	MODEL
		SERIAL NUMBER(S)	
THIS ADDRESS IS: <input type="checkbox"/> PERMANENT <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY			
SECTION I - REPAIRS			
DESCRIPTION OF DEFECTS <i>(Please check)</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> DEAD	<input type="checkbox"/> FADES	<input type="checkbox"/> INTERMITTENT	<input type="checkbox"/> MOISTURE DAMAGE
<input type="checkbox"/> NOISY	<input type="checkbox"/> WEAK	<input type="checkbox"/> DISTORTED	<input type="checkbox"/> EXCESSIVE BATTERY DRAIN
			<input type="checkbox"/> TELE COIL DEAD/WEAK
			<input type="checkbox"/> FEEDBACK
SECTION II - ACCESSORIES			
ITEM(S) NEEDED			
REMARKS			

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(See instructions on reverse side)

**REQUEST FOR REPAIRS,
AND/OR ACCESSORIES**

EAR	MAKE	MODEL	SERIAL NUMBERS
Regular Right			
Regular Left			
Spare Right			
Spare Left			



Hearing Aid Battery Order Form

1. PRINT LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL	
2. PRINT ADDRESS (<i>Street No., City, State, and ZIP Code</i>)	
3. PRINT LAST FOUR DIGITS OF YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	
4. THIS ADDRESS IS: <input type="checkbox"/> PERMANENT	5. DATE <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY
Please send a six month supply of batteries for the following hearing aids:	
TRADE NAME	
MODEL	
SERIAL NUMBER(S)	
NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY HEARING AID(S) USED	
BATTERY SIZE	
ACCESSORIES	
REMARKS	
NOTE: <i>If privacy is desired, insert in envelope and mail to addressee.</i>	

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2346

**REQUEST FOR HEARING AID
BATTERIES & ACCESSORIES**





VA Healthcare On The Web

www.va.gov/visns/visn02

Upstate New York Veterans ~

Wherever you are, When you need help ...

VA TELCARE

1-888-838-7890

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