

Adjusting to Amplification

by Audiology 3

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ADJUSTING TO AMPLIFICATION

A¹ hearing aid is designed to make sounds louder, so that an individual with hearing impairment would be able to hear them. However, no matter how good your hearing aid is, nothing can substitute a normally functioning ear. Just wearing the hearing aid will not bring your hearing back to normal. You will need to get used to your hearing aid, as the sound coming from the hearing aid will not sound natural. Adjusting to amplification requires several months.

Some of the things you may have to get used to include:

- 1. New sounds:** Till you started wearing your hearing aid, you might not have heard certain sounds at all. Listen to the sounds around you - the rustle of the newspaper, the hum of the refrigerator, the telephone or the doorbell ringing, the traffic outside, etc. Remember that people with normal hearing also hear these sounds. Get used to these sounds so that they do not distract you when you are listening to someone speak. Check if any of these sound too loud. If so, consult your audiologist.



- 2. Having something in the ear:** It generally takes a person two to six months before they get accustomed to having something in the ear. While it may be extremely uncomfortable to have something in your ear all the time, bear in mind that you will get used to it with time. However, if the ear mold causes you pain or does not fit properly, consult your

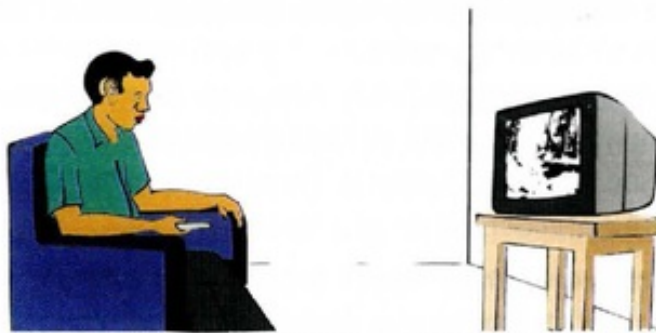
audiologist. An ill-fitting mold causes discomfort. It causes sound to leak, resulting in a squeal. This also drains the hearing aid battery faster.

- 3. Your own voice:** Your own voice may sound loud and hollow. This is due to occlusion effect, which is a result of your ear canal being blocked by the ear mold. You can get used to this by reading aloud and listening to yourself. Ask your family members to compare the loudness of your voice when you are using the hearing aid to the loudness when you are not.



Here are a few suggestions to help make the process of learning to cope with amplification easier:

- 1. Shorter duration of use in the beginning:** Start by wearing the hearing aid only for two hours, three times a day. You might want to wear it only for an hour at a time. Gradually increase the duration for which you wear the hearing aid. Do this until you can comfortably wear it from the time you wake up in the morning till you go to bed at night. But remember to take your hearing aid off when you bathe and sleep.
- 2. Frequent usage:** Do not restrict the usage of your hearing aid only to special occasions or important conversations. Wearing your hearing aid all the time helps you adapt to amplified sound faster and better.
- 3. Quiet situations first:** Wear your hearing aid in quiet situations, initially. Practice wearing your hearing aid at home, while watching TV or having a quiet conversation with family. If you start practicing to listen in noisy situations, the presence of so much noise may be



overwhelming, and might make listening very difficult or uncomfortable.

- 4. Practice with family members:** Try conversing with one family member at a time, initially. It is important that your family members speak naturally. Tell them not to shout, exaggerate their lip



lip movements, or mumble. Once you are comfortable with one-to-one conversations, you may move on to group discussions.

- 5. Speech reading:** Speech reading may be used along with your hearing. Position yourself such that you face the speaker directly. Ensure that there is sufficient light. Closely attend to the speaker's lip movements and facial expressions. Use these visual cues to



supplement any information you might have missed using audition. As you become more proficient at speech reading, increase the distance between you and the speaker.

6. **Varied listening situations:** Make a gradual progression from easy to difficult listening situations. Try conversing with small groups of 2 to 3 persons, preferably family members. Concentrate on the speaker, and stay within 5 feet of the group members. Gradually, expose yourself to varied listening situations. Try listening to the TV or radio at the volume level that is normal for your family.
7. **Localize sounds:** Make a conscious effort to identify the direction from which you hear a particular sound. You might find this difficult, especially if you wear only one hearing aid. If you use hearing aids on both ears, you may be able to localize sounds better. However, the ability to localize sounds depends on several factors such as the hearing ability of each ear and the difference in sound arriving at the ears. Hence, hearing aids may limit your localization abilities. You can try to overcome this limitation with sufficient practice. For example, if you hear a dog bark, try to find out where the dog is barking from, just by listening. At traffic intersections, try to identify the direction from which a bus or a car is coming. Be visually alert of traffic from different directions rather than depending on your localizing ability, especially if you are wearing only one hearing aid.
8. **Difficult listening situations:** At a party, in a railway station or at a marketplace, you may find that the high level of noise interferes with your ability to listen. In such cases, position yourself close to the speaker so that their lip movements are visible to you. In busy and noisy restaurants, choose a quiet table in a corner of the restaurant rather than one at the center or close to the kitchen. Similarly, at auditoriums and theaters, avoid sitting close to walls, pillars, loudspeakers, or under the balcony. Do not choose corner seats as both visibility and audibility would be poor.

Though hearing aids cannot fully compensate for a hearing loss, with experience, you will appreciate the benefit provided by your hearing aid. With practice, you can overcome the limitations of your hearing aid, and can look forward to many years of good listening.

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If you have any questions/comments, or need any help, feel free to contact us:

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