

# HEARING AIDS INSIDE OUT

SELECTED TIPS - 113 PAGES!

Hearing Aids Inside Out



113 Pages!

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## An Introduction To Hearing Aids

It is estimated that more than 28 million people in the US have a significant loss of hearing. For the majority of these people, a hearing aid will probably be the best way to improve their hearing. Recent advancements in hearing aid technology mean that modern hearing aids have a high level of sound quality in a very small device. It should be noted that a hearing aid will not restore normal hearing. What it can do is make it easier for the user to detect and interpret sounds. Often someone who is hard of hearing will not notice if someone is trying to speak to them. This is what a hearing aid will help with.

Although there are several distinct types of hearing aids on the market today, they all work in a similar fashion. A microphone or receiver picks up sound waves and converts them to an electric signal. This signal is then processed and sent to a speaker, which converts it back to an audio signal. The processing serves to amplify those frequencies of which the user has trouble hearing. Hearing aids are able to allow their user to hear human speech at a comfortable volume. This may require some time to adjust to the new signals the brain receives.

Hearing aids are not a perfect solution – they do have their limitations. They will not restore normal hearing, nor will they eliminate background noise. However, they may be adjusted to lessen background noise. New users to hearing aids often complain that their voices sound funny to themselves, and that they are bothered by the relative loud noise from things like refrigerator fans and traffic on the street outside. However, as they have a chance to adapt to their new hearing aid, their brain begins to filter out background noises to a more comfortable level.

There are different types of hearing loss. The two main types are conductive hearing loss and sensorineural hearing loss. Conductive hearing loss occurs when sound waves cannot reach the inner ear. This can be caused by such things as a buildup of earwax, infection, fluid in the ear, or a punctured eardrum. Sensorineural hearing loss occurs when there is damage to the auditory nerve or hair cells in the inner ear. This damage can be the result of loud noise, injury, infection, a genetic condition or aging. While conductive hearing loss can often be corrected by surgery, sensorineural hearing loss can not.

## History Of Hearing Aids

A hearing aid is a device that helps someone who has trouble hearing. Hearing aids today are electronic instruments that receive and amplify sounds. The first hearing aids are now known as body worn aids. They are bulky instruments about the size of a deck of cards that are designed to be carried in a pocket. A wire connects the hearing aid to an earphone. Body worn aids are seldom used anymore, except occasionally in the case of very severe hearing loss.

The most common hearing aid type today is the behind the ear aid, or BTE. A behind the ear hearing aid consists of a case that clips behind the ear and is connected directly by plastic sound tubes to a custom molded earpiece. BTE's are used for a wide range of hearing losses. Behind the ear hearing aids generally have a larger battery than other types of hearing aids, allowing them to be more powerful and have a longer life.

With improved technology and miniaturization of electronics, the next generation of hearing aids, in the ear or ITE, became possible. These aids fit in the outer ear bowl. ITE's can be visible to the casual observer. They are also the largest of the custom made styles, and are often the most comfortable, cheapest and simplest to use. Smaller than the in the ear hearing aid is the in the canal, or ITC hearing aid. These aids are usually more expensive than ITE's, and are also harder to adjust owing to the small size of the volume wheel. Going even smaller we find the mini canal, or MC hearing aid. These are the smallest hearing aid you can get that still have a volume adjustment wheel.

The tiniest hearing aids made are the completely in the canal, or CIC hearing aids. They fit so deeply into the ear that they require a removal string. CIC's do not usually have manual controls simply because of their size.

Combining some of the attributes of the behind the ear and the completely in the canal hearing aids are the post auricular canal devices. This design physically separates the processor from the earpiece. The small processor fits behind the ear, while the receiver and speaker portion is imbedded in the earpiece which is placed deep in the ear canal.

Choosing a type of hearing aid is usually making a trade-off between size, price and flexibility.

## Hearing Aids Inside Out

The largest hearing aids used today, the BTE's, are generally the cheapest, most powerful, easiest to adjust and the most durable. However, they are also the most conspicuous. BTE's tend to be the best choice for children, however, owing to their durability and the ability to replace the earpiece as the child grows. Other types of hearing aids would have to be replaced periodically when the child outgrows them.

## Hearing Loss And Hearing Aids

It is estimated that more than 28 million Americans are hard of hearing. For most, a hearing aid is the appropriate solution. A hearing aid is a device that helps someone who has trouble hearing. Hearing aids today are electronic instruments that receive and amplify sounds. The earliest hearing aids were usually cone-shaped devices that funneled sound towards the ear in order to amplify it. All hearing aids consist of a microphone or receiver to pick up sound waves and convert them to an electric signal. This signal is then processed and sent to a speaker, which converts it back to an audio signal. The processing serves to amplify those frequencies of which the user has trouble hearing.

There two types of hearing loss are conductive hearing loss and sensorineural hearing loss. Conductive hearing loss occurs when sound waves cannot reach the inner ear and are caused by something like a buildup of earwax, infection, fluid in the ear, or a punctured eardrum. Sensorineural hearing loss occurs when there is damage to the auditory nerve or hair cells in the inner ear. Conductive hearing loss is usually corrected by surgery. Sensorineural hearing loss is usually corrected with a hearing aid.

Hearing aids are not a perfect solution – they do have their limitations. They will not restore normal hearing, nor will they eliminate background noise. However, they may be adjusted to lessen background noise. New users to hearing aids often complain that their voices sound funny to themselves, and that they are bothered by the relative loud noise from things like refrigerator fans and traffic on the street outside. However, as they have a chance to adapt to their new hearing aid, their brain begins to filter out background noises to a more comfortable level.

## Types Of Hearing Aids

Old style hearing aids are now known as body worn aids. They were relatively large devices about the size of a deck of cards. Body worn aids are seldom used anymore, except occasionally in the case of very severe hearing loss. The most common hearing aid type today is the behind the ear aid, or BTE. A behind the ear hearing aid consists of a case that clips behind the ear and is connected directly by plastic sound tubes to a custom molded earpiece. BTE's are generally more suitable for children, as they are more durable and easier to adapt as the child grows. The next type of hearing aid is the in the ear or ITE hearing aid. These aids fit in the outer ear bowl and can be visible. They are the most comfortable, least expensive, and easiest to use of the custom fitted hearing aids. Smaller than the in the ear hearing aid is the in the canal, or ITC hearing aid. These aids are usually more expensive than ITE's, and are also harder to adjust owing to the small size of the volume wheel. Even smaller than the ITC's are the mini canal, or MC, hearing aid. These are the smallest hearing aid you can get that still have a volume adjustment wheel. The tiniest hearing aids made are the completely in the canal, or CIC hearing aids. They fit so deeply into the ear that they require a removal string. CIC's do not usually have manual controls simply because of their size.

A feature available on many hearing aids is the telecoil. Telecoils allow the hearing aid to pick up magnetic signals and process them as audio signal. Telecoils were originally developed to help those with hearing aids use the telephone. Older telephone produced fairly strong magnetic fields in their earpieces, which could be picked up by the telecoil. Modern phones do not normally produce strong enough magnetic fields, but many phones and other devices are equipped to transmit to a telecoil anyway. Most users find that the telecoil provides better sound quality and allow the user to more easily concentrate on the desired sound, despite any background noise.

## **Before You Get Hearing Aids**

The first step in getting a hearing aid is to visit an ear care professional to get a full hearing test. The professional will measure several different facets of your hearing, including how well you can hear different tones or frequencies, and how well you can discern speech with various levels of background noise. You should discuss with your doctor or audiologist whether a hearing aid is the best solution for you, or whether it is possible to correct your hearing loss through surgery. Next you'll want to investigate the different styles of hearing aids, and select the one that is right for you, your hearing loss, and your lifestyle. Most hearing aid companies offer a trial period, so don't hesitate to try more than one aid. You will want to check out what features are available with the different hearing aids. Two features which are especially useful are telecoil and direct audio input. These allow you to use assistive listening devices which can be purchased for your home and are available at some public locations.

An important consideration is the full cost of the hearing aid, including batteries and repairs. Make sure you ask what the warranty covers, as well as what is the length of the warranty. A person obtaining a hearing aid for the first time will need to take the time to become familiar with their hearing aid. It may be uncomfortable to start, or your voice may sound funny to yourself. Know how to adjust your hearing aid properly, and be sure to return to your audiologist or hearing aid dispenser for a proper adjustment if it is not comfortable.

## Maintaining Your Hearing Aids

It is very important to maintain your hearing aid properly. Hearing aids are delicate instruments, and looking after them is vital. You will need to know how to clean your hearing aid by removing wax buildup, how to replace and dispose of batteries and how to remove moisture from the aid. In order to properly maintain your hearing aid you will want a battery tester and spare batteries, silica gel packs and a plastic stethoscope. You will want to keep your hearing aid clean by wiping it daily with a dry tissue. Moisture is the enemy of your hearing aid, so do not wash it, even with a damp cloth. The silica gel packs are used to prevent moisture from getting into your hearing aid while you are not wearing it. The most common maintenance you will have to do is to replace dead batteries. You will want to replace dead batteries immediately. Remember, in order to prolong the battery life you will want turn off your hearing aids when you're not using them.

A plastic stethoscope is a great tool to make sure your hearing aid is functioning correctly. Use the stethoscope to listen to the output of the hearing aid while you adjust it. You will want to test your hearing aid's response to different volumes and sounds and to check for the presence of static and that the hearing aid is not cutting in and out.

The only part of a hearing aid that should be washed is the ear mold piece of a behind the ear hearing aid. You can gently wash it with a mild detergent. A forced air blower can be used to dry the ear mold more quickly.

If you are having any problems with your hearing aid, take it back to the dispenser or audiologist. A badly functioning hearing aid will cause you discomfort, and decrease the benefit you could have received from it.

## Hearing Aids And Children

As a child grows, the ear grows as well. The behind the ear style of hearing aid is preferred for children because the ear mold can be replaced separately from the rest of the unit. In the ear hearing aids would have to be replaced completely as the child outgrew them. In addition, behind the ear hearing aids are better for children because the ear mold and hearing aid can be more easily cleaned and maintained, the controls are more easily adjusted and monitored by parents. And as any parent knows, because behind the ear hearing aids are larger and less likely to get lost, this will save you considerable expense in replacements.

For most children, the real need for a hearing aid comes at school. Without being able to hear properly, a child will miss instructions from their teacher, leading to frustration and poor performance. For children with hearing problems, many schools now will provide assistive learning systems. In these systems, the teacher is typically given a microphone, and the signal is sent directly to the hearing impaired student via either a telecoil or direct audio input. This type of set-up tends to be more effective for the child as it eliminates the amplification of background noise.

In the ear hearing aids are not suitable for young children because the aid must then be replaced frequently as the child grows. Once the child is in their teens, however, their ears will have reached their adult size, and they would be able to wear an in the ear hearing aid if so desired.

## **Batteries For Hearing Aids**

You have hearing aids but have a hard time changing the batteries or are not sure when the batteries should be changed. If you are sure that you're hearing aids are on and you aren't hearing right this might not mean that your hearing aids are broke just that it is time to replace the batteries.

For a guideline to help you remember when you should change the batteries in you're hearing aid; you should at least change them every two weeks. Though you might find that this is too often, mark two weeks on a calendar and see when your hearing starts to decrease. You can mark this on the calendar and go by that.

Though your hearing aid batteries might drain faster the longer you leave you're hearing aids on. Make sure that you turn them off during the night; this will save the battery life. Though, if you are using them a lot during the time that you are using them, the batteries will drain faster.

If you have or are going to get digital hearing aid some of these hearing aids have a low battery warning. These hearing aids will beep to tell you that you have so many hours before the battery stop working. This is a great way to remind yourself if you don't remember when you placed in your last set of batteries.

One important thing is to do is to use a good brand of batteries right from the package. There are special batteries cases that you can buy that will help you change the batteries in you're hearing aids. These might be a little bit more money but they'll save you time from changing around the small batteries. Once you have changed the batteries a few times, you should have it down pat.

## Hearing Aids: Policies And Warranties

With digital hearing aids the technology that are used for these are the best that has been made. You should look at all the researches you need that can help you narrow down what kind of hearing aid that you need. With so many brands that you can pick from you might have a hard time deciding from what you need.

It might be best to start with the top brands. Research what they have to offer. Keep notes of all the information that you find. This will help you remind yourself what you have found and prices. You might even want to look at the companies return policies and see if they have a no risk evaluation period.

If you find a company that has good policies then you should be able to try hearing aids for so many days risk free. This can help you decide if you can use them. Remember that hearing aids are something that will take a while to get use to. You might have to change the volume and make sure that they work for you before you decide to return them.

You might even find that some companies have warranties that you can get. This will be a good idea to buy. Some warranties might only last for a year. But if you look around you might find that there are longer warranties. This is something that will be a plus for you in case something happens to your hearing aids.

There is also a chance that you might get a supply of batteries with the purchase of your hearing aids. This can be a plus, you won't have to go out and look for batteries when they are needed. One thing to make sure that you look for is that you find a company that has offers that can help you.

## Hearing Aids: Just One Or Two?

If you've been looking into getting hearing aids and believe that using only one hearing aid will be enough. The answer is no. You have two ears so you need both hearing aids to be on and working for you to be hearing right. Each ear will pick up different sounds for you to process.

If you have been to a doctor and know that you have different hearing in each ear then you should know if you need a different volume for each ear. This is simply done with getting digital hearing aids. These hearing aids can be tuned to the volume you need.

If you are just using one hearing at the moment you might be start realizing that you are missing parts of a conversation. Or maybe you aren't catching words that are spoken to the ear that has no hearing aid. If you know that this is the case then you should get your hearing checked.

Getting your hearing checked can be the quickest way to know if what kind of hearing aids you need. Once you've had your hearing checked and find out that your hearing had decreased. Then you should look into getting digital hearing. These hearing aids will be able to be changed with your hearing needs.

If you know you are planning on getting new hearing aids, with the internet these days you can find hearing aids for sale. This might be a cheaper way to buy your hearing aids then buying them from a local store. If you don't have access to a computer, ask a family member.

Using one hearing aid will not improve your hearing needs. You should be using two hearing aids at all time. It will make your hearing much better and you'll be able to follow conversation and listen to music and TV much easily.

One thing you should at least know some about when you go out to buy anything, more so when you're planning on buying some hearing aids. Knowing terms will help you know what you're looking at when you decide to buy hearing aids. Even if you're a planning on buying digital hearing aids some of the terms below will help you. Some terms you should look for are:

- **Analog:** this type is found the most in hearing aids. They do how ever make all sounds the

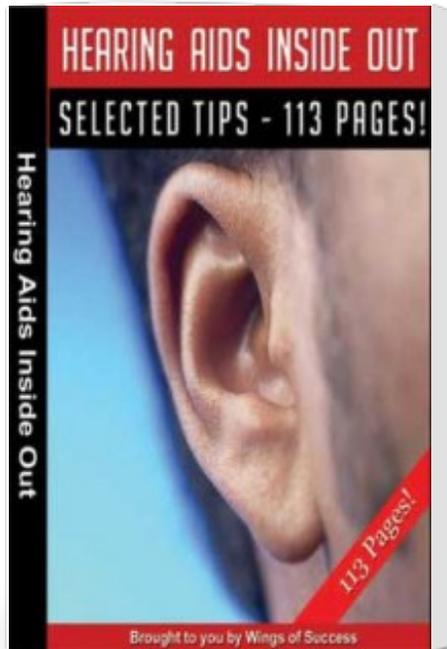
## Hearing Aids Inside Out

same equal in volume.

- **Assistance Listening Devices:** these are a variety of instruments, (phones, clocks, baby monitors, etc) which help the hearing impaired.
- **Behind the Ear:** these hearing aids are worn behind the ears.
- **Cochlear:** a part of the inner ear.
- **Completely in the Canal:** This hearing aid fits down into the canal of the ear and you won't be able to see it. Because of how small this hearing aid is it might not be the right choice for people with severe hearing loss.
- **Conductive Hearing Loss:** hearing impairment caused by interference with sound. This kind of hearing loss can mean disease, infection or trauma.
- **Decibels:** a unit measurement that relates to sound.
- **In the Canal:** These are similar to CIC but this type is larger and doesn't fit right into the ear canal.
- **In the Ear:** These hearing aids are they kind that fit in the outer ear. They are used for a wide range of hearing loss. This type of hearing aid is larger than others. ITE hearing aids can be used around technology also.

All these terms can help you when you buy your hearing aids. From digital hearing aids to a different type of hearing aid, reaching and knowing what is out there will save you time in finding the right hearing aids.

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