



UNDERSTANDING HEARING LOSS

What is Neural Plasticity?

Why does it take time to adjust to hearing aids?

WE'RE ALWAYS HERE TO HELP

3-year plan to ensure optimal performance from your hearing aids.

TIPS FOR HAVING CONVERSATIONS

How can you help yourself and others to enjoy clearer and more productive conversations?

ADJUSTING TO YOUR NEW HEARING AIDS

GUIDE BOOK

smart  hearing
SOLUTIONS

Congratulations!

You're experiencing hearing difficulties and have made the important step to adopt hearing aids. While you will once again hear sounds you have been missing, you will face some challenges.

As you experience amplification during the first few weeks, some sounds may even startle you. Others may seem "tinny". Your voice may sound strange. This is all very normal and it will improve.

You see, the hearing system is very complex and your brain will require a period of re-education in order to selectively focus, filter, and interpret sounds.

This booklet will help you better understand the challenges ahead. We'll also provide you with tips on how to maximize the effectiveness of your devices. Remember, Smart Hearing Solutions are with you every step of the way, through in-person appointments, or TeleHealth, for counselling and fine-tuning your hearing aids.



Contents

The Science of Neural Plasticity 3
Why does it take time to adjust to hearing aids?	
Hearing care, service, and maintenance 4
We'll be with you, every step of the way.	
Maximise your hearing potential 5
Communication Tips for you and your friends, family, and colleagues.	
Hearing Health Tips 7
Achieve your best possible hearing outcome... sooner.	
Ask our Expert 11
Jodi answers frequently asked questions from new hearing aid wearers.	

Why does it take time to adjust to hearing aids?

Hearing loss occurs gradually. Over the years you may have lost the ability to hear certain sounds in the speech spectrum. You may also be missing normal sounds of the environment, such as: traffic and wind noise; the hum of machinery; and other background noises.

First-time hearing aid wearers, and those with more severe hearing losses, may feel that sound doesn't seem "natural". Most of the time, this is due to changes in the brain that occurred when it was deprived of sounds, rather than the sound quality of the hearing aid itself. It will improve.

Understanding hearing loss

Sounds are processed by neurons within the brain, which are "wired" to process frequencies across the normal range of human hearing. When a neuron is deprived of the sound that it was tasked to process, the brain will reassign that neuron to another job.

More simply, "use it, or lose it".

When sound is turned back on by your hearing aids, the brain takes a little time to reallocate neurons to interpreting the sounds that had been missing. This process is known as Neural Plasticity.



What does this mean for you?

This science has led to two key strategies in the field of hearing care:

1. Early intervention produces the best long-term benefits and satisfaction for hearing aid wearers.
2. Aural Rehabilitation is often necessary, particularly when fitting hearing aids to someone who has lived with hearing loss for a long time.



Over time, try to wear your hearing aids more and more in noisy and windy environments.

Be patient and keep wearing your hearing aids

The process of retraining the brain is faster and more effective when the brain is stimulated with returned sounds. So, wear your hearing aids as much as possible, gradually increasing to 8 - 12 hours per day.

You'll become increasingly skilled at recognising sound direction and adjusting your hearing aid settings to work best for you in different situations.



Many clients love the convenience of accessing our services without having to come into the hearing centre.

Ask your Hearing Care Professional how you can gain access to TeleHealth services.

TeleHealth

You can call on our help without ever leaving home.

✓ Fine-tuning your hearing aids

✓ Counselling

✓ Free trials of the latest digital hearing aids

✓ Hearing aid user training

✓ General advice

We'll be with you,
every step of the way.

Gold Standard Aftercare Service



We have developed our Gold Standard Aftercare Service Package to ensure that your hearing aids continue to function correctly and are optimised for your needs. Nevertheless, you shouldn't hesitate to call at any time you require support, advice, and hearing aid servicing... you're covered.



Hearing Aid Adjustments

At 10 weeks and annually thereafter

- ✔ Check hearing aid settings
- ✔ Check hearing goals still being met
- ✔ Fine tuning hearing aid settings (as required)
- ✔ Discuss hearing tactics
- ✔ Device management



Hearing Aid Clean & Check

Annually

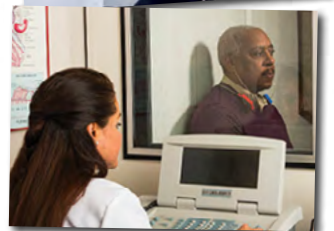
- ✔ Check/change microphone cover and wax guards
- ✔ Check/replace earmolds and tubing
- ✔ New dome/ultra-sonic earmold clean
- ✔ Check/clean battery contacts
- ✔ Check hook (if applicable)
- ✔ Check switches, buttons, and receiver (RIC)
- ✔ Sound performance check



Hearing Review

Every 1 - 2 years

- ✔ Full hearing evaluation
- ✔ Review hearing goals
- ✔ Check hearing aid settings
- ✔ Real ear measurement (as required)
- ✔ Adjust hearing aid settings (as required)
- ✔ Review of hearing tactics for new goals



Communication Tips

for you, your friends, family, and colleagues.

Communicating with people suffering hearing loss can be difficult and frustrating for BOTH sides of the conversation. Here we have provided some tips to help minimize this frustration.

Tips for you

- 1 **Let people know** that your hearing isn't great and how they can help. It's better that they're aware of your hearing issues rather than mistake you for being rude or 'a little slow'.
 - "Because of my hearing, it's difficult when there's more than one person speaking at a time..."
 - "Make sure you get my attention, or I may miss what you're saying."
 - "I read lips, so can I face you?"
 - "I heard you're away for the holidays, but missed where you're heading..."
- 2 **Staying positive and friendly** increases others willingness to help. And when someone goes out of their way to help, be sure to show your appreciation.
 - "Can you speak up... you are not speaking clearly enough"
 - "Sorry, I have trouble hearing. Could you please speak up a little?"
- 3 **Find the best location** to engage in conversations, when possible.
 - "I don't hear well in background noise. Can we move over there?"
 - "Do you mind sitting on my right? That's my good ear."
- 4 **Concentrate on the speaker** and look closely for visual cues, such as facial expressions, body language and lip movement.





Tips for others

- 1 **Show your support** by improving your knowledge about hearing loss and, if you're available, accompanying them to appointments at Smart Hearing Solutions.
- 2 Before starting to speak, **make sure you have their attention**.
- 3 **Avoid shouting**. Speaking calmly and clearly is far more effective.
- 4 **Let them see your mouth**. Face them and lower your hands, masks, and food as they all impede lip-reading.
- 5 **Use physical gestures help with understanding**. For example, if asking "what time is it?", point to your watch.
- 6 If you were not understood the first time, **try saying it a different way**.

Environmental Tips

- 1 **Turn off radio / television / stereo**.
- 2 **Move to a quieter location**.
- 3 **Reduce distance** between you and the listener. Don't try to talk to the person from a different room
- 4 **Position the speaker**, so that their face is well lit.

Achieve your best possible hearing outcome... sooner.

By the time you have adopted hearing aids, it's likely that your hearing hasn't been ideal for some time. It will take time to adjust to hearing the sounds you have been missing, but here are some tips to achieve the best results sooner.

Exercises to help accelerate brain training



Read aloud to yourself.

Does your voice sound different? Your voice will be louder and could sound like you have a lisp, because you are hearing “s” clearly for the first time in years. Over time, your voice will begin to sound much more natural.

Introduce noisy situations gradually.

At first, noisy situations may seem overwhelming with your new hearing aids, but it is important keep persevering. Voices will become clearer and background noise will become less distracting.



Be patient.

Hearing aids don't repair damaged ears, so you won't achieve the hearing of a healthy 18 year old. Similarly, they won't completely block out background noise, but that's ok! Even people with perfect hearing can experience difficulty following conversations in noisy environments.

Familiarise yourself with features and controls

Read through your User Guide

If you understand how to manage settings, wearing your hearing aids will be more effective and comfortable.

Get familiar with features such as volume control, battery draw, and remote controls.

You should also practice removing and replacing (or charging) your hearing aid batteries.



Hearing aid care & maintenance

Hearing aids are highly sophisticated electronic devices that are placed in ears that are moist and warm. Therefore, ensuring that microphones and receivers are free of dust, moisture, and earwax is very important to their performance.

We'll show you how to clean and care for your hearing aids. You can also refer to some great online videos on the Phonak YouTube Channel.



Scan the QR Codes with your phone camera to view online instructional videos.



Cleaning a custom-fitted hearing aid



Cleaning a Receiver In Canal hearing aid



Cleaning a hearing aid with a slim tube



Cleaning a hearing aid with an earmould



Jason Rayment
Principal and Audiometrist

Q&A Session

Jason, from Smart Hearing Solutions, has been a hearing care professional for over 15 years. Here he answers some of the most common questions from new hearing aid users.

How long do hearing aids last?

As a rule of thumb, your new hearing aids should last at least 4 – 5 years. How much longer they will last will depend on factors such as:

- How much you wear your hearing aid
- Levels of activity and perspiration (i.e. water and dirt)
- How much your hearing continues to change.

What does the manufacturer's guarantee cover?

If your hearing aid isn't working properly, you won't have to pay for it to be fixed or replaced. If the hearing aids have been misused, costs will not be covered.

What is the Gold Standard Aftercare Service and will it benefit me?

Our Gold Standard Aftercare Service covers you for all hearing aid adjustments, minor repairs, clean and checks, and hearing evaluations for 3 years. Ask your Hearing Care Professional for more information!

My hearing aid is too loud. What can I do?

While patience is important, if you're experiencing discomfort or are not wearing your hearing aids because they are too loud, please call us to arrange additional fine-tuning at no cost!

My hearing aids are not working properly. What should I do?

If your hearing aids don't seem to be working properly, here's a quick checklist that often resolves the problem in a matter of minutes.

- Make sure the battery door is properly closed.
- Change or charge battery.
- Check your hearing aids are on the setting most appropriate for the listening environment.
- Clean your ears of any excess earwax.
- Check and clean tubes, domes, and earmould for blockages caused by earwax.

Still having problems? Pop into your hearing centre or call **1300 017 732** for help or advice.

Great Value.
Local.
Trusted Advice.

smart  hearing
SOLUTIONS

 1300 017 732

 ST AGNES - St Agnes Shopping Centre
GOLDEN GROVE - The Grove Shopping Centre
GLENELG - 3 Nile St, Glenelg

 smarthearingsolutions.com.au

 facebook.com/smarthearingsolutions