

Getting Hearing Aids - Frequently Asked Questions

- **Do I really need to have two hearing aids?**

Your Audiologist may have recommended two hearing aids for you. We often get asked whether two hearing aids are really crucial to help someone hear better? Assuming that you have hearing loss in both ears, two hearing aids are needed to help you localize the direction of sounds and more importantly, you need to hear from both sides of your head to help you hear speech in a noisy situation such as restaurants and shopping centres. Hearing aids do not restore your hearing back to “normal” due to the damage in your ears. It is therefore, extremely important that where we can, we give you the best opportunity to achieve the best results and this generally means having two hearing aids. There are some medical issues that might prevent someone from having a hearing aid on both sides but your Audiologist would have explained other options to you at your initial appointment if this was the case.

- **What am I expected to hear with the hearing aids?**

If this is the first time you are getting hearing aids, your Audiologist would have outlined the different options available to you at your initial appointment and will further guide you in getting used to the hearing aids over the coming appointments.

Briefly, it does take a little while to get used to the amplified sounds from the hearing aids. Hearing aids cannot restore your hearing back to “normal” due to a number of factors including the damage to the ears, limitations of technology, etc. What you can expect is that you should be able to hear sounds and speech with more ease and less concentration with the hearing aids. Depending on the technology that is in the model of hearing aids chosen, you should also be able to pick up some speech in background noise situations. (See section on Directional Microphones for more information)

What is important to remember is that we are essentially giving you back almost “normal” hearing in a short period of time and so you may find some environmental sounds too loud and annoying at first. This does take time for your brain to readjust – it’s estimated that on average, it may take up to 3 months to fully get used to the sound of the hearing aids. Your Audiologist will be able to advise and prescribe a rehabilitation program specific for your needs and situation.

- **I should be able to hear everything with my hearing aids, shouldn’t I?**

It is a fairly accepted misconception that hearing aids should allow the wearer to hear everything. This is not always the case due to damage in the ears, amongst other factors. Because understanding language is an extremely complex central task, wearing hearing aids

doesn't mean that you will never miss a single word again – this is in fact impossible even for a normal hearing individual! What we do expect is that, with hearing aid use, you will pick up on more important speech information than before, allowing you to better piece together the “message” from the speaker so that you no longer experience fatigue and frustration.

- **Why did my Audiologist insist on a Directional Microphone in my hearing aids?**

At AudioClinic Tasmania, our clinicians rarely prescribe a hearing aid without a directional microphone. The reason for this is that this technology is needed by almost everyone in order for them to hear conversations better in noisy places (eg. Restaurants, shopping centres, etc).

Whilst hearing aids without directional microphones might be slightly smaller in size, we find that most users are happy to compromise slightly on cosmetics for more welled rounded functionality of the instruments. Most of us are constantly in situations that are noisy in today's society and the ability to hear in noisy situations is very important for the overall satisfaction of the hearing aid user.

A basic directional microphone focuses at the front of the wearer and turns down the sounds from the side and behind the listener. Eg. In a café situation, the wearer will hear the person in front of them “better” than the clattering to the side and behind them; making it easier to communicate. Your Audiologist can give you more information about the technology in the hearing aids.

- **What is the Return Policy?**

AudioClinic Tasmania provides a 30 day money back guarantee on all privately purchased and Top up Government hearing aids. We understand that there is some consumer confusion out there about hearing technology and what is available. Our audiologists do their utmost to try and prescribe a model of hearing aids most suited to your needs and budget.

However, as we are dealing with the complex human body, there are times when factors come to light during your rehabilitation program that we have not accounted for. In cases like these, we can look at fitting you with a different model of technology that might address these issues more appropriately.

We may also find, during your 30 day trial period, that for whatever reason, you cannot make use of a certain type of sound processing from the hearing aid and a different hearing aid might suit better. There are still a lot of scientific unknowns associated with hearing loss and we feel that the only way to account for this is to provide a trial period.

If you feel at the end of the trial period, that you do not want to keep the hearing aids, we are happy to refund you the cost of the aids minus \$250 admin fee to cover us for the consultations and admin costs. By this stage, you generally would have consulted with our Audiologist on a number of occasions. It is important to our clinic that you are happy with your purchase.

**Free government hearing aids are not covered under the return policy. These hearing aids cannot be returned to the manufacturer. We do, however, try to make sure that the hearing aid you are fitted with free from the government is working to a satisfactory level before finalizing your claim.*

- **Why are hearing aids so expensive?**

There are a number of issues influencing the cost of hearing aids. Firstly, everybody wants the smallest hearing aid possible. Because of this, much of hearing aid research goes into designing the smallest possible “super” computers that deliver highly sophisticated sound processing. The cost of research is extremely expensive and unfortunately, this is passed on to the consumer. Another compounding factor is that hearing loss is what we term an “invisible” disability – you cannot “see” someone’s hearing loss and as such hearing loss is often not high on the list of priorities when policies are written.

- **Are hearing aids covered under my private health insurance?**

Depending on your level of cover and your health fund, you may be able to claim back a portion of the cost of the hearing aids (this applies for private purchases and government top-up hearing aids). The best thing to do is to call your health fund and find out exactly how much is covered. We do ask that you pay for the hearing aids at your fitting appointment and your health fund will provide you with a reimbursement. Unfortunately, hearing is not included in the automated claiming scheme for health insurance (HiCaps) and we are not able to access your claim directly.

- **Would I be able to include hearing aids in my tax return as a health expense?**

If you put in a tax return, you may be eligible for a tax deduction for the cost of the hearing aids. According to the Australian Taxation Office website:

“You can claim a tax offset of 20% - 20cents in the dollar – of your net medical expense over \$1500. There is no upper limit on the amount you can claim. Net medical expenses are the medical expenses you have paid less and refunds you got, or could get, from Medicare and or a private health insurer.”

As we are only hearing specialists and not qualified to provide you with taxation advice - the best thing to do is to consult your Accountant!

- **When do I pay for the hearing aids?**

We ask that you pay for the full amount of the hearing aids when you come to get them at your fitting appointment. Your assurance is our provision of the 30 day money back guarantee which we will honor. Our clinic’s reputation is extremely important to us and we get the majority of our patients through referrals from our other patients. You can rest assured that our clinicians and staff will always try their best to provide you with superior service and advice.

- **Do you offer a part payment option for hearing aids?**

We are not able to provide you with part payment options as the hearing aids are paid for in advance by us to the manufacturer in preparation for your fitting appointment.

- **Should I insure my hearing aids?**

Yes! If you are fitted with private or government top up hearing aids, we strongly recommend that you itemize your hearing aids as a specific item under your Home & Contents insurance to cover for lost or damage. Please contact your insurer to find out more.

- **What is the warranty period and what is covered?**

The standard manufacturer warranty period on hearing aids is 3 years nationwide from the date of fitting. Defects arising from improper handling, wax or moisture damage are not covered and may void the warranty.

Please note that any issue relating to the “fit” of the hearing aids or your earmoulds need to be sorted out within 2 months as the 3 year warranty period does not cover for reshelling of the hearing aids or the remake of earmoulds. If your hearing aids are physically uncomfortable in your ears or have a tendency to move out of your ears during the day, please let us know straight away. The cost of reshell can be quite expensive (\$100 per aid) and it’s important for us to rectify any “fit” issues within 2 months of the fitting to avoid unnecessary costs to yourself.

- **How long do repairs take?**

All hearing aid manufacturers are located outside Tasmania. We generally allow 10 working days for a repair to come back to us pending there are no delays with the courier. Our staff are fully trained to provide minor repairs and maintenance to hearing aids so we will always try to fix the problem at the clinic first before sending them off to the manufacturer. Hearing aids out of warranty for Private clients generally cost around \$150 per aid for a minor repair so it’s important that you keep the aid clean and maintain it daily to extend the life of the instrument.

- **What about Batteries?**

Most people are surprised to learn that the batteries only last about 5-10days depending on the size of the battery itself. There are four different battery sizes. For Private patients, you can purchase batteries at our clinics for a small fee. We stock high quality batteries. The batteries are zinc-air batteries and they start to drain once out of the packet as they react with the air. It is important then to keep the batteries in the packet until you are ready to change them. We have been told by our patients that some batteries they purchase at chemists may not last as long however, we do not have any information about which brands are poorer than others. It’s always a good idea to have spare batteries with you. In emergencies, you can find them at most chemists.

(Please read the next section if you are eligible for the Batteries & maintenance Program under the Office of Hearing Services).

- **Office of Hearing Services – Annual Batteries and Maintenance Program?**

Those patients on the Office of Hearing Services Program (OHS) can sign up for the annual Batteries and Maintenance Program. This covers for any repairs to the hearing aids and also unlimited batteries for 12 months. There is a small fee involved but it is highly recommended as it saves you money in the long run. Patients who are DVA (Department of Veteran Affairs) exempt are signed onto the program without incurring any fees.

- **You mentioned “Top-up” government hearing aids several times, what are these?**

By this stage, our staff would have assisted you in determining whether you are eligible for subsidized hearing services under the Office of Hearing Services (OHS). OHS patients are eligible to a pair of basic free digital hearing aids. Some OHS patients elect to pay extra to “top-up” to more efficient technology and these are what we term “top-up” hearing aids. We provide a 30day money back guarantee for all top up hearing aids that are fitted. If you decide that the hearing aids are not suitable for you within the 30days, you can return them and we will refund you the top up amount and move you to the free hearing aids or try a different model of hearing aid, depending on the circumstance. Top Up patients do not need to pay the \$250 trial fee mentioned earlier as the government covers for some of your appointments during the trial period.

- **How often do I need to come back for retest and readjustments?**

Hearing rehabilitation is an ongoing process! Because you already have a hearing loss, your hearing levels are mostly likely to change over time, and we need to make sure that the settings on your hearing aids match the changes in your hearing as closely as we can. This is where we need you to be self-monitoring and to alert us if you think your hearing has dropped.

We generally recommend that you come back in for an AID ADJUST appointment 12 months after your initial fitting. We will then carry out a quick hearing recheck and adjust the hearing aids as appropriate. There is nothing worse than wearing hearing aids that are on the setting for your hearing 3 years ago! For OHS patients, your Aid Adjust appointment is paid for by the government. Private patients are charged \$50 for the appointment. Of course, if you think that you are not hearing as well as you used to, even before the 12 month period, please contact our office straight away.

- **Okay, so I’m happy with the hearing aids and my Audiologist has said that he/she doesn’t need to see me for 12 months. What do I do when something goes wrong?**

Call us! Most common problems with hearing aids can be easily and quickly solved but, if you don’t tell us about it, we just assume you are going okay! Our friendly staff are trained to identify what needs to be done when things go wrong. They’d be able to let you know whether you need to drop the aid in or need an appointment.

Aid Checks appointments are covered under the OHS batteries & maintenance Program for government patients.

Private patients can access complimentary Aid Check appointments for the first 12 months since their fitting date. After this, we generally recommend an Aid Adjust appointment (\$50) which covers a hearing re-test as well as adjustments. Aid Check appointments, after the initial 12 months, are charged at \$25 per appointment. You may be able to claim these back through your health insurance so please contact them to find out.

- **What other accessories and additional costs are there?**

For some models of hearing aids, you may need to purchase additional accessories such as speakers, domes or wax management. These generally cost around \$10-\$15 dollars per packet – your Audiologist will explain whether this applies to your model of hearing aids or not. The latest open-fit hearing aids require Speaker replacement at the 12-18 month mark – for Private patients, our clinic will cover the cost of speaker replacement for the 3 year warranty period. After this, the cost of speaker replacement is \$120 per hearing aid. OHS patients with batteries and maintenance program do not pay for domes, wax management or speakers.

- **I'm still not sure about.....**

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to call one of our friendly staff members on 1800 057 220 and they will be able to assist you.