



NEWS FROM AVA HEARING CENTER

5344 Plainfield NE, Suite 4
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525
Phone 616-365-1979

EXPECTATIONS

Making the choice to improve your communication ability by utilizing hearing aids can be a big step. No one loves to wear hearing aids, glasses or braces but the benefits typically outweigh the inconvenience, expense and maintenance. To get the most out of your new hearing aids you need to acclimate. Here are some ideas on what to expect and how to maximize your performance.

Because hearing aids amplify sound you should be able to see immediate benefit with:

- Improvement with one-to-one conversation.
- The volume of the television can be immediately turned down.
- Your awareness of sounds in your environment will immediately increase.
- Keep in mind that your ability to understand speech when in background noise is not going to be as good as your ability in quiet. This is true for normal hearing ears as well.

In many cases hearing loss is due to damaged nerve endings in the ear. This means that the signal being sent from the ear to the brain is incomplete. A hearing aid will help your ear maximize the remaining nerve endings but the brain will still need to “fill in” the missing parts of the signal. We may hear with our ears but we listen with our brain. For most hearing aid wearers, efforts must be made to improve the ability to listen. Auditory exercises and home aural rehabilitation programs may be needed to improve rapid thought processing, auditory memory and signal recognition.

- Consider using hearing aids as soon as hearing loss is noticed. This will help insure that the brain doesn't “forget” how to use information from the ear.
- Acclimating to hearing aid use is much easier when the hearing loss is mild than it will be if the hearing loss has progressed to a moderate range of impairment or beyond.
- Because hearing loss typically has a very gradual onset, many people don't realize how much they have been missing. If you are over the age of 50, or if you have other high risk factors like a family history of hearing loss, a history of noise exposure, ringing in the ears, dizziness or ototoxic medication use, get your hearing tested annually.

Keep in mind that when you first utilize hearing aids:

- You will hear sounds you have not heard for a while (like paper rustling or the refrigerator humming). This is expected. Normal hearing ears hear these signals all the time. Your brain needs to decide if the

sound carries meaning so it must pay attention to the signal OR the signal is meaningless and can ignore the sound.

- Hearing aids WILL NOT restore your hearing capabilities to "normal" or to the sensitivities you had as a child. Hearing aids do not repair the damaged nerves. They maximize the remaining potentials.
- Soft speech should be audible, average speech should be comfortable, and loud speech should be loud but not uncomfortable. Keep notes during the adjustment period to identify what type of sounds are offensive. Often, the hearing aids may be reprogrammed by your audiologist to minimize negative sound quality.
- Your hearing aids or earmolds should be comfortable enough to wear all day. Watch for "hot spots" or soreness. Most often these issues can be resolved in the office.
- There should be no feedback when the hearing aids are properly seated in your ears. However, every hearing aid will have feedback under certain conditions. If the amplified signal is venting out of the ear and being deflected back into the hearing aid by a cupped hand or other obstruction, feedback will occur. This is NORMAL feedback. Though feedback control features are much improved in today's digital hearing aids, the laws of physics still apply. If you have feedback with chewing, talking or sitting quietly, this is NOT NORMAL and should be reported to your audiologist. It may be caused by a poor fit, earwax in the ear canal or too much sound escaping through the air vent.
- Be patient. Hearing aids help the peripheral hearing system but the brain must have an opportunity to "re-learn" how to handle the information. It is OK to take a break from the hearing aid for a short period of time. Be sure to put the hearing aids back in your ears after an hour or so. The goal is to teach the brain to accept the amplified signal as "normal hearing".
- Wear your hearing aids often, not just when you know you will be in a tough listening environment. It is all about PRACTICING and ACCLIMATING.