

Hearing Aid Information Pack

This pack will provide an introduction to your hearing aid/s and the services provided by the Audiology Departments at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Updated December 2020

C2Hear is a website with interactive videos that contains essential information and advice on getting the most out of hearing aids. Please visit: www.c2hearonline.com

Please note that HEARING AID batteries can be harmful to babies, young children pets and vulnerable adults if swallowed. Please make sure your hearing aid batteries are kept safe, out of reach and recycled appropriately. If a battery has been swallowed, seek medical help immediately.

Please remember every 3-4 months to replace your Corda wires or every 4-6 months to get your hearing aids retubed. Your hearing aids may stop working effectively if this is not carried out. Details of how you can request this are on page 4.

A guide to your Hearing Aid

Introduction

This information is to help you get the best out of your hearing aid. It tells you how to use it and what the NHS provides. It also tells you what to do if your hearing aid is not working properly.

It should be used in conjunction with your hearing aid instruction booklet.

What does the NHS provide?

NHS hearing aids are free on loan. You will get free packs of batteries when you need them. If your hearing aid goes wrong it will be repaired or you will be given a replacement hearing aid. We will reassess your hearing as clinically required. Approximately every 3-5 years you may require a reassessment of your hearing. Please contact the department who will see if you are eligible and add your name to the waiting list.

Please ensure that you look after your hearing aid as West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust do charge for replacement of lost aid (certain exceptions apply) and ***may charge for repairs or replacement if you have been careless or misuse it.***

Your hearing aid has been prescribed to suit your particular hearing loss. DO NOT allow anyone else to use your hearing aid, even for a short time as this could affect their hearing.

Please note at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust we only provide Behind-The-Ear digital hearing aids. Styles may vary depending on hearing level and clinical requirements. We do not provide small In-The-Ear hearing aids.

Unused hearing aids

If you do not use your hearing aid, no longer need it, or are leaving the country for an extended period, please return it to your department telling them why. It is valuable NHS property and can be reconditioned and reused.

Getting Used to the Hearing Aid

If you have not worn an aid before, please allow yourself sufficient time to get used to it.

- Familiarise yourself with your specific model of aid, make sure you know how the controls work.
- Practice putting it in and taking it out.... (please refer to separate detailed instructions)
This may seem very awkward at first, but most people can do it without thinking within a week or so. If necessary, your audiologist can show you again how to do it.
- Take time to get used to the sound of the hearing aid. Remember that the brain has become used to a lowered level of hearing. The aid will allow you to hear sounds that you may not have heard for a long time, but they are unlikely to sound completely natural at first as it can take time for your brain to adjust to hearing these sounds again. For instance, people often find that their own voice appears particularly strange. Don't worry about this to begin with, but if you have not become accustomed to your own voice within a couple of weeks, you should tell your audiologist.
- Build up your use of the hearing aid gradually. Start by listening to easier sounds such as the news on the television. Don't try in difficult listening situations such as outside or in noisy places, until you are really used to the sound of it. It is also important to allow your ear to gradually get used to wearing the ear-mould; otherwise it might become sore. Remember to switch off your aid when you take it out or when not in use.

Additional programs and assistive devices

Induction Loop

These enable hearing aid users to pick up sound more clearly at a distance or across a counter window by using the loop switch/button at the back of your aid or 'T' position. A loop system transfers sound directly to the hearing aid, cutting out most background noise. You will find loops in many theatres, places of worship, conference halls, booking offices, and at bank counters. You can also have a loop fitted at home, for listening to TV and audio equipment, for example.



Telephones

Some telephones and mobile phones- described as 'hearing aid compatible'- have small loops built into them. You can use your loop program to access this.

If your telephone is not 'hearing aid compatible' do not use the loop facility. Instead, hold the telephone earpiece near the microphone on your hearing aid. Your audiologist can show you how to do this. There is a picture in the hearing aid instruction book that will show you where best to position it.

Other equipment

A hearing aid can help you to hear many things in and around the house, but even with its help you may find that you have some remaining problems.

If you have difficulty hearing such things as alarm clocks, telephone ringing, doorbells, babies crying, or smoke alarms, you can get alerting devices that have been designed to help. These use flashing lights, amplifiers, pagers or vibrating pads to draw your attention to sounds.

If you find it hard to listen to the television or to hear voices on the telephone, other equipment is available to help.

The equipment may be available through your social services department or organisation(s) providing services on their behalf or can be purchased. Assistive equipment, like the ones mentioned above, for deaf and hard of hearing people can be purchased from: www.connevans.co.uk

If you are in employment you may be eligible to claim assistive equipment, which works with your hearing aids, to help you to hear better in work environments, through the Access to Work grant: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Repairs

The tubing should be replaced **every 4-6 months**. Your hearing aid(s) may stop working effectively if this is not done.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, there are no longer any open repair clinics. We are only able to repair your hearing aid if you either:

1. **Post your hearing aid(s) to us.** *If you are requesting a postal repair you can post your hearing aid(s) with the brown book and a note describing the nature of the problem, to the **addresses below ONLY**. Please include a stamped address envelope for return (a minimum of one **LARGE 1st or LARGE 2nd class stamp**).*



Address for postal repairs:

Audiology Department
St Albans City Hospital
Waverley Road
St Albans
Herts
AL3 5PN

Audiology Department
Watford General Hospital
Vicarage Road
Watford
Herts
WD18 0HB

2. **Drop-Off your hearing aid(s)** *in an envelope with your full name, address, date of birth and contact number and a description of the fault to our drop-off box during the drop-off times only.*

Hearing Aid Collection. *Your hearing aid can be collected during our collection times only. We will aim to have your hearing aids ready to collect on the same day they were dropped off or posted back to you if noted.*

Drop-Off Box and Collection Box Operating Times:

Monday to Friday

DROP OFF TIME: 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM ONLY

COLLECTION TIME: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM ONLY

Drop-Off Box and Collection Box Locations:

- Watford General Hospital Main Reception
- Enquiry Desk, St Albans City Hospital
- Trolley by Outpatient Doors of Hemel Hempstead Hospital

Appointments

Due to Covid-19, we will try to do as much as we can via post or telephone or via the Drop-off box in the first instance.

We can see patients Face-to-Face, however we have limited capacity for these types of appointments due to Social distancing in the waiting rooms and reducing the footfall throughout the hospitals.

If you think you need an appointment please phone the Hearing Aid Centre for further advice – see the last page for telephone numbers.

- There is an answer phone facility at each of the hospitals, ***if you are unable to speak to someone- just leave your name and telephone number and a short message and a member of the staff will contact you as soon as possible.***
- We also have a phone that can accept text messages only, for patients who are unable to use a voice phone. (See telephone number on the last page)

Batteries

All of the hearing aid centres offer a postal replacement battery service. Please see the last sheet for addresses. You can post the brown booklet or record card issued to you when you obtained your hearing aid and include a stamped address envelope for return. (Please enclose a minimum of one LARGE 1st or 2nd class stamp; once the batteries are in the envelope it becomes too thick to qualify for a small stamp)

Batteries can also be collected at the following locations. **Please always bring your brown hearing aid record book or record card.**

Hemel Hempstead

◆ Hemel Hempstead General Hospital- Out Patients (*batteries only*)

Out Patients Department, 2nd floor, Verulam Wing

SUSPENDED DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

St Albans City Hospital

◆ St Albans Hospital, Enquiries Desk (*batteries only*)

Monday to Friday

◆ St Albans Health and Wellbeing Centre, Civic Centre, St Albans, AL1 3JE (*batteries only*)

Mon-Fri 9.00am – 12.30pm and 1.00pm -4.30pm

Watford General Hospital

◆ Watford Hospital Main Reception (*batteries only*)

Monday to Friday when reception desk is staffed

Also at the following Health Centres for batteries only during Opening Hours (updated May 2020):

Pathfinders Practice South Oxhey

Harpenden Memorial Hospital – SUSPENDED DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Manor View Practice, Bushey Health Centre- Tues, Wed, Thurs 12pm-3pm

Milton House Surgery, Doctors Common Road, Berkhamsted- Tues, Wed, Thurs 2pm-5pm

Everest House Surgery, Everest Way, Hemel Hempstead- Mon-Fri 9am-1pm and 2pm-5pm

Coleridge House Medical Centre, 2 Coleridge Crescent, Hemel Hempstead- Mon-Fri 8.30am-6.30pm

Parkwood Surgery, Parkwood Drive, Warners End, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2LD, Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

Lions Bookshop, Unit 7 The Marlowes Shopping Centre, Hemel Hempstead, Sat & Sun 10am-4pm

Gossoms End Surgery, Victory Road, Berkhamsted, HP4 1DL, Mon – Fri 2pm-4pm

Battery Information

- Each battery lasts approximately 7-10 days.
- Please dispose of used batteries in a Battery Recycling bin at your local supermarket or equivalent.
- Batteries should not be put in a fire as they may explode.
- Do not attempt to re-charge the batteries.
- Batteries can be harmful if swallowed. If this happens contact **999** immediately.
- Batteries must be stored in a cool, dry and safe place out of the reach of children, animals and vulnerable adults.
- Do not expose your hearing aid batteries to extreme temperatures.
- In certain circumstances a small deposit of white powder may appear on the surface of batteries, which indicates the battery is leaking. This is quite harmless but direct handling of affected batteries should be avoided, as should hand to eye and mouth contact. Hands should be washed after handling affected batteries.

Other helpful organizations

Action On Hearing Loss- new name for RNID (Royal National Institute for the Deaf)

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

19–23 Featherstone Street London EC1Y 8SL

Freephone Information Line, Telephone: 0808 808 0123 **Textphone:** 0808 808 9000 **SMS:** 0780 0000 360

Email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk

Connevans – <https://www.connevans.co.uk/>

Specialising in equipment for deaf and hard of hearing people and audio products.

Telephone: 01737 247571, **Email:** info@connevans.com, **Minicom:** 01737 644016

Access to Work - <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

You can apply for a government grant that can provide excellent specialist equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help you do things like answer the phone or go to meetings at work etc

Telephone: 0800 121 7479, **Textphone:** 0800 121 7579, **Relay UK** (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 121 7479 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

C2Hear- www.c2hearonline.com

C2Hear is a website with interactive videos that contains essential information and advice on getting the most out of hearing aids.

Next Generation Text Service <http://www.ngts.org.uk/>

Next Generation Text service is a 24-hour telephone relay service that connects deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing and speech-impaired people with hearing people anywhere in the world.

Telephone helpline: 0800 7311 888 **Textphone helpline:** 0800 500 888

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) www.ndcs.org.uk

For parents of deaf or hard of hearing children.

15 Dufferin Street, London EC1Y 8UR **Telephone:** 020 7490 8656 **Textphone:** 020 7490 8656 **Fax:** 020 7251 5020 **Freephone helpline:** 0808 800 8880 (voice and text) **Email:** ndcs@ndcs.org.uk

Association of Teachers of Lip-reading to Adults (ATLA) www.lipreading.org.uk

ATLA can provide information about local lip-reading classes.

Westwood Park, London Road, Little Horshesley, Colchester CO6 4BS **Email:** ATLA@lipreading.org.uk

Sign Community www.signcommunity.org.uk

The Sign community provides help and support to deaf people, particularly on sign-language users.

Email: info@signcommunity.org.uk

British Tinnitus Association www.tinnitus.org.uk

This national charity supports local self-help groups and takes an interest in research.

Ground Floor, Unit 5, Acorn Business Park, Woodseats Close, Sheffield S8 0TB **Freephone (UK):** 0800 018 0527 **Email:** info@tinnitus.org.uk

Take on Tinnitus - <https://www.takeontinnitus.co.uk/>

An interactive website that gives information about what tinnitus is and things you can do to manage it.

Sense (a Deaf Blind Charity) www.sense.org.uk

Sense is the national voluntary organisation for anyone who is both deaf and blind;

101 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LG **Telephone:** 0300 330 9256 **Textphone:** 0300 330 9252 **Email:** info@sense.org.uk

Deafblind UK www.deafblind.org.uk

A national charity that provides a range of support services to deafblind adults and their carers.

The National Centre for Deafblindness, John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD **Telephone (voice/text):** 01733 358100 **Fax:** 01733 358356 **Email:** info@deafblind.org.uk

Sensory Services (Herts County Council Adult care services) www.hertfordshire.gov.uk

This service is run by the council and can provide an assessment to see if you would benefit from other equipment to help you hear. You do not need your doctor or audiology department to refer you; you can request an assessment yourself by using the website or by phone; **Telephone:** 0300 123 4043

General Communication Tips for Someone with Hearing Loss

- Make people aware that you are deaf or have a hearing loss and your preferred communication style.
- Where lip reading is possible:
 - Make sure they face you
 - Make sure you can see their face clearly
 - Make sure the person gets your attention before they start speaking
 - Ask them to speak normally and not exaggerate their lip movements
- The tips below are particularly important when someone cannot use visual cues, such as on the telephone or when wearing a mask:
 - Ask them to **speak clearly**
 - Ask them to **repeat or say things differently** if you do not understand what they have said
 - **Reduce background noise** as much as possible by moving to a quieter space if possible
 - **Use assistive devices** like remote microphones with hearing aids to improve the quality of speech over background noise
 - **Write things down** – use pen on paper, text on device screens or whiteboards
 - If possible, ask them to **speak to a relative or friend**

Communication Tips for the General Public

- Remember that people who are D/deaf or have hearing loss have individual communication needs and you should ask someone how best you can communicate with them. Not every tip below will be appropriate for every person who is D/deaf or has hearing loss.
- Be patient and considerate, it is a stressful time for us all, but people with deafness and hearing loss who rely on facial expressions and lipreading are finding things especially difficult right now.
- The tips below are particularly important when someone cannot use visual cues, such as on the telephone or when wearing a mask:
 - Make sure you are **facing the person** you are talking to and speak clearly – avoid shouting, speaking too fast or unnecessarily slow
 - If someone doesn't understand you, **repeat what you said or phrase it differently**, use plain language
 - In a noisy place, **move to a quieter area** if possible
 - **Use simple gestures** such as pointing or waving to get someone's attention.
 - **Write things down** – use pen on paper, text on device screens, or whiteboards
 - If they ask, **speak to a relative or friend**

Useful Tools

- There are live speech-to-text apps available, though with varying levels of accuracy depending on background noise and speed of conversation.
- Utilise Video Relay Services, such as Interpreter Now, for British Sign Language users

**Name, address and contact numbers of your local
Hearing Aid Departments are:**

Hearing Aid/ Audiology Department

St Albans City Hospital

Waverley Road

St Albans

Herts

AL3 5PN

Tel- 01727 897 835

Text mobile only 07341478009

Hearing Aid/ Audiology Department

Watford General Hospital

Vicarage Road

Watford

Herts

WD18 0HB

Tel- 01923 217646

Text mobile only 07341478009

Hearing Aid/ Audiology Department

Hemel Hempstead General Hospital

Hillfield Road

Hemel Hempstead

Herts

Tel- 01727 897 835

Text mobile only 07341478009

Department website:

www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/ourservices/adult_audiology

Department email:

Westherts.audiology@nhs.net