

Introductory course for hearing aid users.

New to using hearing aids

Welcome to the world of hearing aids

About 200,000 Norwegians currently wear hearing aids. It is likely that many more of us would benefit from wearing them.

When you are new to hearing aids, motivation is crucial. It is not enough for family members, friends and colleagues to be supportive: it is very important that you yourself want to use these devices to improve your hearing in your everyday life. Remember that maintaining your auditory system requires constant stimulation through exposure to speech and other sounds.

Getting off to a good start with your hearing aid.

You have had a hearing test, and now you have been supplied with your first specially configured hearing aids. Hearing impairment differs from one individual to another, which means that devices and configurations that may be suitable for others may not be the best ones for you. Your audiologist is trained to help you to identify the devices that best suit you. However, in this process you must expect that the devices your audiologist has prescribed may need to be adjusted several times. It may even be necessary for you to try out several types or models.

Getting to know your new hearing aid.

There is a severe shortage of audiologists in Norway, which results in long waiting lists and a lot of pressure on the audiologists themselves. They have little time to inform new users about such things as relevant health regulations, battery replacement, use and maintenance of hearing aids. This is where HLF (the Norwegian Hearing Association) comes in. We exist to work for the interests of people with hearing impairment. One of our aims is to help newcomers to hearing technology (like you) to become better acquainted with their hearing aids.

Getting started: step by step.

Over time, our brains gradually adapt to poor hearing. Hearing aids expose us to unaccustomed sound impressions and listening situations. This calls for a new process of adaptation, which also takes time. To start with, you may want to use your devices for only a few hours a day in the quiet surroundings of your own home. Then, as the days go by, you can gradually increase the number of hours you use them – and the situations in which you use them.

A few suggestions for getting started

- Become familiar with everyday sounds.
- Identify sounds you may not have heard for a while, and try to locate them.
- Make yourself familiar with sounds like running water, rustling paper, a phone ringing etc. At first they may sound a little unfamiliar, but you will soon get used to them.

Talk to other people

- Human talk consists of many complex sounds. Following conversations may not be easy. Start at home by listening to familiar voices in quiet surroundings.
- Then try to understand conversations in rather more noisy environments.
- Listen to the radio or watch TV. Try adjusting the set to sound levels that others find comfortable.
- If you have volume controls on your devices, try to adjust them to suit your own hearing needs.
- Most devices now have built-in *telecoil* (induction loop) receivers. These make it possible for you to use an induction loop or other aids that use this technology.
- Try to make yourself familiar with different listening environments. After a few days you will recognise most common sounds in your home. Then start to use these devices in more noisy environments, for example at work or in social gatherings. Try to pick out specific voices and sounds and to focus your attention on these. In locations like lecture halls, we would advise you to try to sit as close to the speaker as possible. In cafes and restaurants it is best to sit where you can see the faces of the people you are talking to.

Continuous use

- The best effect of your hearing aids will be achieved once you have accustomed yourself to a wide range of new sounds. In order for your brain to become fully familiar with your sound environment, you must use your hearing aids throughout the day.
- **Give your audiologist some feedback.**
Tell your audiologist what you are experiencing. In the trial period, it may be an idea to write down how it works for you in different situations. In that way you can give your audiologist specific feedback, making it easier for her to correct your appliances.

Take good care of your hearing aid.

Your hearing aids get exposed to moisture, heat and earwax. Here are some ideas on how to take the best possible care of their components.

- Make sure your device is always clean. Do not expose it to moisture.
- Make a habit of cleaning the earbuds and the other parts every day. **Note that these are marked red for the right ear and blue for the left.** The settings on each appliance will often be different, **so you should only work with one device at a time.**
- Never use liquid to clean your hearing aids - avoid getting water on them.

- When you are not using your hearing aids, it is advisable to open the battery door slightly. This turns them off and makes the batteries last a little longer.

Batteries.

- Batteries should be kept dry and at normal room temperature.

Battery types.

- No.10 Yellow Label. (lasts about 5-7 days)
- No.13 Red Label. (lasts approximately 7-12 days)
- No.312, Brown label. (lasts about 5-9 days.)
- No.675, Blue Label. (lasts approximately 14 days. Not much used nowadays.)

Air/zinc batteries.

- HLF sells only Zinc-Air hearing aid batteries.
- Batteries contain a zinc component that starts discharging when exposed to air. For that **reason you should not remove the protective seal before use.**

• Zinc-Air batteries can be stored for a long time, and have good capacity as long as their protective seals are in place. When these are removed, air enters the battery casing and the zinc substance begins to produce electricity. This process can not be stopped.

• After the protective seal has been removed it takes a minute or two for the battery to reach full strength. So sometimes, immediately after inserting a new one, you may get a signal telling you that the battery is about to run out of power. This is normal. Be patient and allow your aid to function normally.

• New batteries are not often faulty, so if your hearing aid does not work after you have replaced the battery, the first thing to do is to open the battery door and make sure the battery is properly in place and the right way up. Then be careful to close the battery door completely.

• If you need to ask someone for advice about your hearing aids, you are welcome to contact a HLF peer volunteer in your area. See our HLF website at:
<https://www.hlf.no/finn-din-narmeste-likeperson/>.

Important! Zinc-air batteries contain mercury and are classified as hazardous waste.

Care and cleaning equipment.

- Black nylon cleaning thread This should be passed through the tube from the hearing aid end to avoid pressing earwax into the tube itself.
- Interdental brushes These can be used for cleaning ear moulds and can be bought at most pharmacies.
- Cleaning brushes. These are used to remove wax from moulds etc.
- Cleaning brushes with magnet. The magnet makes it easy to pick up and hold

batteries.

- Magnet pen. The pen has a powerful magnet to help with inserting and removing batteries.
- Air blower (puffer). This is used to remove moisture from tubes and moulds after cleaning them.
- Filters. These are used to protect the microphones in ITE (in the ear) and BTE (behind the ear) devices.

A selection of cleaning equipment is often supplied together with the hearing appliance.

Simple ways to test hearing aids.

Close the battery door and hold the device inside the hand, the device should then make a squeaking sound (resonance), which indicates that the device is functioning.

If it does not make a squeaking sound:

- Make sure the battery door is closed and that the compartment is free of obstacles .
- Check that the battery has been placed the right way up. Normally the flat side of the battery (the side that the protective seal was attached to) faces out.
- The battery may be discharged (empty). Try to remember when you last replaced it. (When the batteries are almost empty, users will hear some short beeps which are repeated several times before they stop working.)
- Check that there are no bits of wax blocking the ear mould channels, tube or tips.
- Check that the filters are not clogged. If they are, they must be replaced.
- Check that the tubes are not deformed or buckled. If so they must be replaced.

IMPORTANT! Moisture may damage your hearing aids. Keep them away from water. Remove them and put them somewhere dry:

- when you are out in the rain
- before taking a shower.
- before you wash your hair.

Another important point

Insurance

Your new hearing aids cost about kr. 6.000 each, so be sure to insure them!

Suggestion: Check terms and deductibles for insuring these with your insurance company. Then take a look at the Norwegian Hearing Association's (HLF) website (<https://www.hlf.no>), and check what they charge their members for the same cover. You might be surprised.

Volunteer peers

You are doing fine, you catch most of what is being said and you can hear the grasshoppers again. Everything is hunky-dory.

But then one day: Help!

I'm out of batteries – a filter is clogged – a tube is damaged – one of my earplugs is broken!

I need help!!

HLF peers may be able to help you

HLF peers are all hearing impaired, trained volunteers who are there to perform various tasks such as: sale of batteries, filters, tubes and tips, in addition to giving advice and other practical assistance **to members who ask them**. You can find a list of HLF peers on the HLF website:

(<https://www.hlf.no/finn-din-narmeste-likeperson/>)

And a final suggestion:

Before you buy a lot of batteries, check prices at your pharmacy and with your local peers or HLF (<https://www.hlf.no>). You might save a lot of money!