

You can try out your first hearing aid with the full support of your GP and local hospital specialists. This service is free of charge.

*What if your hearing aid doesn't give the improvement you had expected?*

Hearing aids do not always bring immediate improvement. With perseverance and time most people do benefit significantly from a well-fitted hearing aid. However, it is advisable not to use them as a last resort because the practical and emotional problems of hearing loss can be quite severe.

If you would like to investigate the possible benefits of a commercial hearing aid then follow these simple guidelines:-

- Ask someone to recommend a local dispenser.
- Only use a supplier who will allow you to try before you buy.
- Check prices, guarantee and any other conditions carefully.
- Beware of exaggerated advertising claims. As yet no hearing aid can restore your hearing fully.
- Be aware that sending off coupons in advertisements is an invitation for a sales-person to call.
- Try to get a friend or relative to accompany you - resist buying on impulse.

*Some basic tips to assist better communication with someone with hearing loss*

- Look directly at the person when you are speaking to them.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Try to reduce background noise.
- Write things down or use gestures.
- Ensure a well lit environment, don't stand with your back to a window.

This information has been reproduced with the permission of Hearing Concern, which is a national registered charity for hard of hearing people whose principal means of communication is the spoken word. It was established in 1947, enjoys Royal Patronage and is unique among deaf and hard of hearing charities in that it is truly a first force in voluntary action, a mutual self-help organisation with a small number of paid staff.

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# Advice on Hearing Loss



FOUR SEASONS  
HEALTH CARE

Caring  
for you... personally, practically and professionally

Have your family been complaining that you have the television on at full blast or have you noticed that your hearing is not as good as it used to be or do you keep having to ask people to repeat themselves?

You can start to lose your hearing at any age, but it is much more common as you become older as a result of the ageing process and a lifetime of noise damage.

Coming to terms with hearing loss is never easy. You may feel embarrassed, frustrated and isolated. You may need support and information and advice on how to cope with the changes hearing loss can bring. One of the most important things to remember is that you are not alone.

## Hearing loss in Britain

With a current figure of 9 million deaf and hard of hearing people in Britain, it is estimated that over 30% of people over 60 years and over 70% of people over 70 years experience some form of hearing loss.

Hearing loss brings with it new difficulties which can be similar for many people. The most important step is to see a doctor and discuss the problem.

There are many ways in which people with hearing loss can adapt to their situation, these include hearing aids, lipreading, various assistive devices and support groups.

## Living with hearing loss

### *How does it affect you?*

Communication problems brought on by hearing loss can create new obstacles, which need to be overcome. Isolation from the hearing environment may lead to anxiety, depression and panic. People will often try to conceal their hearing loss for as long as possible by pretending to follow conversation, when actually they are struggling.

An inability to participate fully in family, work and social life can be frustrating. Often this results in a gradual withdrawal from situations that are potentially embarrassing or hurtful. This in time leads to further isolation. These distressing feelings, though, are very common, normal and shared by millions of others.

### *Assistive devices*

There are lots of different equipment that can make life with hearing loss easier such as amplified telephone or loop systems for hearing aid users. Subtitles on television (teletext 888) are also helpful for hard of hearing people.

### *Lipreading*

Hearing aids help, but they depend on a person's hearing loss - and lipreading helps too, it depends on how clearly/unclearly other people speak. BUT - when you use them together, they may dramatically improve how much you can understand people.

Lipreading skills can help overcome the isolation, which can all too easily result in having a hearing loss. It can be very important to your feelings of independence, self-esteem

and confidence to participate in activities - whether socially with family and friends; at work; in education or in making use of the public services.

A lipreading class provides the opportunity for meeting people who share similar experiences, for learning how to cope in different social situations and for offering and receiving support from one another. However good the other local statutory services may be, the lipreading class is unique for providing a place for the exchanging of ideas and information with other people who have gone through the same experience as you.

Information about daytime or evening lipreading classes may be available from your local education centre or library.

## Do you think you need a hearing aid?

Many people experience gradual hearing loss, leading to the point when it is sensible to consider a hearing aid. Here are some steps to help you find the right solution.

- We strongly recommend that you begin by visiting your GP. Your doctor can then refer you to an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist or audiology (hearing aid) department.
- The specialist will carry out a complete examination of your hearing and medical history. If your type of hearing loss can benefit from a hearing aid, try one and test the benefits for yourself, but be patient.
- Although it can take some time, the NHS ensures you have a totally comprehensive diagnosis of the problem.