

# Looking after open-fit hearing aids

This information sheet provides information about open-fit hearing aids that have a small earpiece - called a 'dome' - that sits inside the ear canal (see image below).

For information about hearing aids with an earmould, see the information sheet *Looking after standard-fit hearing aids*.

## Open-fit hearing aids

Each audiology provider may have slightly different styles or names of open-fit hearing aids, but they all look similar to the model shown here.

### Tubing

Check for ear wax and condensation, as this can stop the hearing aid from working.

The tubes come in different sizes (the size numbers are on the side of the tube). Tubes with red numbers are for the right ear and tubes with blue numbers are for the left.

### Programme / volume button

If activated, this is usually a volume, hearing loop or background noise button. Some hearing aids have a separate button or wheel for volume control. Check with the resident's audiology provider if unsure.

To reset the hearing aid to its original setting, turn the hearing aid off and back on.

### Dome

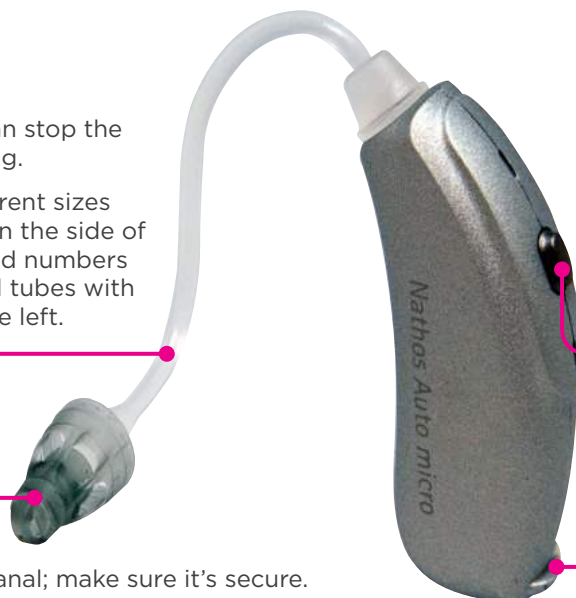
This fits into the ear canal; make sure it's secure.

If the dome isn't pushed into the ear canal properly, this could cause whistling - this doesn't mean the hearing aid is broken.

Any wax trapped inside the dome must be removed, as this can affect the sound quality.

### Battery door

Open: hearing aid off.  
Closed: hearing aid on.



If a person has two hearing aids, they will be marked with a small coloured dot so you know which aid is for which ear. **Red** = right ear, **Blue** = left ear.

## Fitting open-fit hearing aids

Place the main part of the hearing aid behind the person's ear, and the soft tip in their ear canal. Push the tip into the ear canal as far as it will comfortably go, otherwise the person won't hear as well as they should.

If there is a 'tail' of tubing, fold this backwards into the bowl of the person's ear. A correctly fitted open-fit hearing aid should look like the picture below.



## Cleaning and checking hearing aids

When someone has their hearing aids fitted, they should be given written instructions about how to look after them. If you are not clear about any of the information, or do not have access to it, ask the resident's audiology provider for advice.

### Once a day:

- **Clean the hearing aid** – wipe the whole hearing aid, including the tubing and dome, with a soft, dry cloth or tissue. Take care not to get it wet – this will damage the hearing aid.

- **Check the tubing and dome** – make sure they are not split or blocked by wax. If the tubing or dome looks damaged or blocked by wax, it will need replacing by an audiologist. Please note that open-fit hearing aids come with a small wire, to help you push any wax debris through the tubing and dome.

The images below show you how to clean the tubing of an open-fit hearing aid with a cleaning wire. The way you take off the tubing for cleaning is a bit different from one brand of hearing aid to the next, so check the instructions provided.



### Once a week:

- **Change the hearing aid batteries** – check which colour/type to use; this information should be recorded in the resident's 'Hearing aid care plan'. Remove the sticker from the battery and check it's in the right way round.



The Action on Hearing Loss online shop sells cleaning equipment and hearing aid storage boxes to help you keep residents' hearing aids clean and safe. Visit [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop/hearing-aid-accessories](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop/hearing-aid-accessories)

## Hearing aids not working as they should?

### Check that:

- hearing aids are on
- hearing aids are on the standard 'programme/setting' by turning them off and on again
- volume is turned up
- the tubing isn't damaged, squished, split or blocked with ear wax
- tubing is clear of water droplets; if not, gently pull the tubing off the hooked part of the aid and shake to remove.

## Hearing aids whistling?

- Decrease the volume slightly (if the hearing aid has volume control).
- Check hearing aids are not on the loop setting.
- Wax blocking the ears can make hearing aids whistle – a GP can check this. Also see the information on wax management in the guide ***Supporting older people with hearing loss in care settings.***

If the hearing aid still isn't working properly, contact the resident's audiology provider.

## When to refer to audiology

You will need to contact the resident's audiology provider when problems with hearing aids arise, and in the following situations:

- **When hearing aids need retubing** – tubing needs replacing every 3–6 months, or earlier if it is split or blocked by wax, or damaged.
- **To find out more about hearing aid settings** – hearing aids can be set up to work independently or in sync (one hearing aid controls the other). Sometimes, one hearing aid is set up to change programmes (such as 'hearing loop', 'music', 'noise reduction', and so on) and the other controls the volume. Hearing aids are set up differently for each person; some may have a programme button and some may have a volume button/switch or both. If a resident's hearing aid manual doesn't contain this information, please contact their audiology provider.
- **If a hearing aid appears broken** – it will need to go back to audiology for repair or replacement.
- **When the resident is due a hearing assessment** – every three years, people with hearing aids are entitled to a hearing re-assessment on the NHS. This is recommended as hearing loss can change over time.

## Questions about hearing loss or tinnitus?

Contact the free Action on Hearing Loss Information Line:

Telephone: **0808 808 0123** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

SMS: **0780 000 0360** (standard text message rates apply)

Email: **information@hearingloss.org.uk**

You can also visit the Action on Hearing Loss website for information and support: **actiononhearingloss.org.uk**

