



Caring for your Hearing Aids

A BSHAA guide to ITE (In the Ear) aids



CARE • SUPPORT • ADVOCATE

ITE (In the Ear) aids

These small aids fit discreetly into the ear canal. Common sense dictates that a small ITE is more liable to wax blockage than a Behind The Ear (BTE) model because they are sitting in a waxy, moist environment. Therefore, they will require an extremely thorough cleaning regime than other types of aids.



Hearing aid photos courtesy of Starkey Hearing Technologies



IIC (Invisible In the Canal)

The smallest hearing aid that fits deep within the ear canal. May not be suitable for everyone.

CIC (Completely In the Canal)

Slightly larger than an IIC but almost invisible in use.

ITC (In The Canal)

Slightly larger than a CIC and usually visible at the entrance to the ear canal.

Full Shell ITE

BSHAA is the professional body that represents good practice in hearing care by its members. This guide is presented to you by one of its members.

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BSHAA gratefully acknowledges the support of hearing aid manufacturers who have supplied photographs of different hearing instruments for use in this guide. Their inclusion in no way reflects either preference or endorsement of any individual manufacturer by BSHAA.

Introduction

The information provided in this leaflet has been prepared as a reminder to you of what your Audiologist has advised you about cleaning your hearing aids and moulds.

Please check with your Audiologist that you have the correct guide.

After investing in your hearing aids, you will no doubt want to keep them performing to their optimum level and for as long as possible. This cleaning guide will help you keep your aids functioning exactly as they should.

It is **essential** that you have a daily cleaning routine. If you do not do this, the receiver (the component which provides sound into your ear) may become blocked with wax and will gradually become weaker, affecting performance. If not cleaned regularly, it will eventually stop working altogether, requiring repair or even replacement. Wax blockage is regarded by manufacturers as your responsibility so they are within their rights to reject any warranty claim for damage caused by wax blockage – so even more reason to prevent it.

Your Audiologist will explain what is required to clean your aids when they are fitted. Different models require different cleaning regimes. Make sure you have a go at cleaning the aids yourself while you are with the Audiologist, especially if you are a new user.

At any time, if you have difficulty in changing filters or need to go over the cleaning regime again, contact your Audiologist and ask for help – they would prefer you to do this rather than have the aids block with wax and not perform as they should do.

Equipment

To care for your hearing aids effectively you will need:

- Tissues or bacterial wipes if you prefer
- A small brush*
- A hook or pick*
- A wire filament*
- A drying box if necessary

** This equipment will be supplied initially when buying your instruments, **if required**.*

If you find handling the small brush, pick or filament too fiddly, or you have problems with dexterity, a device is available that incorporates all the necessary equipment in one pack. It has a large handle for you to grip the required equipment.

Ask your Audiologist for the cost and advice.

Alternatively, a new very soft baby toothbrush could be used.

All equipment usually can be ordered from your Audiologist.

Caring for your ITE aids

These aids fit in the ear canal and are discreet, consequently they are very small. Common sense dictates that a small ITE is more liable to wax blockage than a Behind The Ear (BTE) model and they will therefore require an extremely thorough cleaning regime – more so than other types of aids as they are sitting in a waxy, moist environment in your ear canal.

At night

- Gently use the little brush supplied with the aid to remove anything on the outside of the aid.
- Wipe the aid with some tissue or bacterial wipes to remove any grease from the shell.
- Open the battery door and check the battery is clean.
- Place the aid somewhere warm to dry. If you find it difficult to dry your aids overnight, you can purchase drying boxes which use crystals to help thoroughly dry the aid. Ask your Audiologist for details. If you have rechargeable instruments the recharging unit should be sufficient to dry the aids.
- **Do not place hearing aids on a radiator or in an oven to dry!**

In the morning

- Any wax will be hard and easier to remove. There are two small holes on the aid. For the one that is slightly raised – normally white and with a ‘lip’ (the wax guard) – take the small pick and **gently** remove any wax that has collected. It is always a good idea to have this hole facing down to avoid any wax going back down the hole. Remember, the receiver is at the bottom of this hole, so go gently.
- The other hole – the one that is not raised – is the vent. Amongst other functions, it allows moisture to escape. This requires cleaning by inserting the filament (it looks like a piece of floppy wire). Insert the filament into the hole and push it right through to the other side of the aid. Move it up and down a few times, just like tooth floss.

Wax guards

These are inexpensive compared to the price of your aid, so it is a false economy not to regularly change the wax guard. If the wax guard has become clogged with wax, it is essential to replace it.

To replace the filter, use the removal and insertion tool that comes with the replacement wax guards. Press the tool end (without the new guard) on to the guard on the aid, press or twist according to the type, and it should come away at the end of the tool. Turn the tool around and press the new wax guard on to the hole and it will stay there – just press lightly afterwards with your finger to make sure it is firmly fixed.

It is advisable, dependant on how much wax you experience, to change the wax guards at least every two weeks or even more often if you produce a lot of wax. If you are struggling – **STOP** – and contact your audiologist for advice.

You can find out more about BSHAA – and access lots of information about hearing care – at www.bshaa.com