Audiology Department

Getting used to your wireless CROS / BiCROS hearing aid

This leaflet is for patients who have been recently fitted with a wireless CROS or BiCROS hearing aid

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You may see the following terms used in this leaflet:

CROS stands for Contralateral Routing of Offside Sound – this means that a hearing aid worn on the bad ear picks up sound from that side and sends it across the head to a hearing aid which is worn in the good ear.

CROS hearing aid: A special type of hearing aid used for people with normal hearing in one ear and poor hearing in the other – these patients are often referred to as having Single Sided Deafness (SSD) or hearing loss.

BiCROS hearing aid: Similar to a CROS aid (see above) only in this case the wearer also has some hearing loss in their better ear which means that the hearing aid in the better ear will amplify sound coming from both sides.

1. Getting used to your new aids (acclimatising to the sound)

It can take people two months, or longer, to get fully used to a new set of hearing aids, but everyone is different. You may find that things sound louder than before, especially in noisy places. High pitched sounds may be more noticeable (such as food packets, clothes rubbing as you walk, running water, oven timers, alarms). Your own voice may sound a little echoey or louder to yourself, you will sound normal to your friends and family.
The other thing that takes time to get used to is the feeling of having something in your ear(s). This is like getting new shoes, you may notice (or feel) them in your ears to begin with but you will get used to this sensation as time goes by, if you persevere.

You may feel comfortable wearing your hearing aid all day from when you first get them, however for most people it helps to build up your wearing time gradually over a few weeks. An example is given below:

- Start off by wearing your hearing aid at home for a few hours a day, maybe in the evening with the television – do this for a week or so.
- After a week try wearing the hearing aids for ½ a day every day (put them in at lunch time).
- After two or three weeks try wearing the hearing aid all day (or at least from 09:00 to 17:00).

It is important to give yourself time to get used to your hearing aid but also to push yourself – it will take time to get used to the aids but you must persevere to get the fullest benefit from them in the long term.

2. Getting used to your new aids (buttons and beeps)

Beeps

- Low battery (on the good side): two long beeps
- Low battery (on the bad side): two long beeps then a ‘ding dong’
- Lost connection: ‘ding dong’ (descending – getting lower in pitch)
- Re-connection: ‘ding dong’ (ascending – getting higher in pitch)

Volume Control

If you have a volume control on your hearing aids:

Aids with button only:

- To increase the level of the sound, press the push button (4) on your right aid
- To decrease the level of the sound, press the push button (4) on your left aid
Aids with a button and a rocker switch:

- Press on the top of rocker switch to turn make the sound louder
- Press on the bottom of the rocker switch to make the sound quieter

Programmes

You may have extra programmes on your aids (check your brown record book if you are unsure).
If you have extra programmes on your hearing aid (e.g. loop / telecoil), press the push button on the back of the hearing aid on your better hearing ear:

- Press once for programme 1 (you will hear one beep)
- Press again for programme 2 (you will hear two beeps)
- Press again to go back to your start-up (default) programme (you will hear a ‘bing bong’ sound)

When you turn the hearing aids off they will automatically reset to their original volume and programme settings.

3. **Situations where your CROS aid may help**

Many patients find wearing a CROS aid gives them more awareness of sound from the non-hearing side:

- This can help with the embarrassment of appearing rude if someone speaks to you on your bad side without knowing you can’t hear them
- Some people feel less ‘cut-off’ on the bad side when wearing the CROS aid
- Often the CROS aid helps in the car where the passenger / driver is on your bad side (depending on how noisy the car / traffic is)
- In situations where there is a little background noise generally the CROS aid helps
- In meeting rooms with good acoustics (i.e. not too big, or echoey) and where people speak clearly and one at a time the CROS aid should help
- If you have trouble hearing the television, often a CROS aid will help

**Tinnitus and sensitivity to sound**

- Some patients find wearing a CROS aid helps their tinnitus – this is probably due to reducing the effort is takes to listen with one ear (especially in noisy situations)
- Most patients find their tinnitus is unchanged (no better or worse) when wearing their CROS aid

4. **Situations where your CROS aid may not help**

**Localising sound**

- Wearing a CROS will not improve your ability to tell where a sound is coming from.

**Music**

- Wearing a CROS aid will not restore ‘stereo’ sound – there are however special headphones / pieces of equipment which may help somewhat with this (please ask for more information about this).

**Background noise / poor acoustic environments**

- If you have your bad ear towards noise the CROS aid may make it harder to hear than if you didn’t have the aid in (experiment with and without the CROS aid on).
• If you have your good ear towards noise and there is speech coming from the bad side the CROS aid may help somewhat, however background noise will still be challenging.

A hearing aid can only do so much, in order to cope with your hearing loss you will also need to use communication tactics to help – get people to stand / sit on your better side if possible. In noisy situations it may help to sit with your back to a wall, or in the corner of the room, with your good ear directed towards the rest of the room. Experiment in different situations with and without your CROS aid on.

5. Looking after your hearing aid

Change the batteries when you hear the low battery warning sound(s) – this will happen after two or three days for the CROS aid (the bad side) and three or four days for the hearing aid (good side).

Change the tubes every 4-6 months (come to a repair session at the hospital or post your brown record book to the department with a note asking for a new tube – enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if possible).

Keep the aids away from moisture – dry your hair fully before wearing the aids. If you work in a very dusty / damp environment consider buying a cover for the aids.

If your hearing aids get damp / wet try putting them somewhere warm and dry overnight (e.g. the airing cupboard).

Consider purchasing a drying box or kit for your aids (especially if you are prone to over sweating) – see the Accessories leaflet or search for ‘hearing aid’ drying kit / box online.

6. What happens next / follow up

You will receive a face to face follow up appointment in about six months if this was specifically requested at your fitting appointment.

Otherwise you will receive a follow up letter in about four months with the option to ask for a further face to face appointment, receive a call from the team, or to be left to carry on as you are.

If you have minor problems (aid not working / uncomfortable) come to a repairs session.

If you are struggling to get used to the sound or have lots of problems please phone to ask for an appointment (try to give it at least a month before doing this and try to wear the aids as much as possible).

If you no longer wish to wear your hearing aids (and don’t want a further appointment to explore this) – please return them to the department by post or in person with a note explaining that you no longer need / want the hearing aids.
Please do not keep ‘spare’ sets of aids.

After your follow up phone call / appointment you will not be automatically recalled for further appointments / hearing tests. If you feel that your hearing has changed, or the hearing aid no longer works effectively for you – please phone the department for an appointment.

In general most people’s hearing does not significantly deteriorate in less than about three years, but everyone is different – so ask for an appointment sooner than this if you think your hearing has changed.

7. Problem Solving

My hearing aid is not working
Try changing the batteries, check the tubes for moisture or blockages – small bits of dirt / skin / wax can sometimes get into the tubes.

My batteries are running out very quickly
Depending on the model of aid you have – the CROS aid (for your bad ear) will last two to three days per battery; the hearing aid (for your good ear) will last three to four days per battery.

My hearing aid is making a constant buzzing sound that wasn’t there before
The hearing aid may be faulty, please stop wearing it and contact the department.

My hearing aid is whistling or squeaking
Come to a repair session to have your ears checked for wax / tubes changed.

My hearing aid is intermittent
Various things can cause this – most often it is moisture, try purchasing a drying kit for the aids to see if this helps.

The aids can sometimes spontaneously lose their connection to each other, you may have to turn them off and on to reconnect them.

Sometimes the aids take longer than normal to turn on, or re-connect to each other – up to 15 seconds is considered normal by the manufacturer.

In some case the arms of glasses seem to interfere with the wireless signal between the hearing aids, try moving the aids above the arms to see if this helps – it may be that you need to try glasses with smaller / thinner arms, plastic may be better than metal.

My hearing aid is uncomfortable or will not stay on my ear
Come to a repair session at the hospital.

Problem: My hearing aid tube is bent
Come to a repair session, or post your brown record book to the department with a note asking for a new tube (enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if possible).

My hearing aid has been dropped in water / got wet
Place the aids somewhere warm and dry overnight (like the airing cupboard), check there is no fluid in the tubing. If this does not work contact the department.
I am still struggling to hear in noisy places
A CROS aid can only help so much, if you are struggling please ask for an appointment – there may be accessories which work with the aids which could offer a little extra help.

I have lost my hearing aid
Phone or email the department. You may be charged for losing your aid (depending on the circumstances).

I need more tubes / batteries
Come to a local hearing help session (see your leaflet), or post your brown record book to the department.

Problem: I don’t know what settings my aids have / what model hearing aids do I have?
Check the front of your brown record book for details.

8. Safety Information

Please refer to the information in the manufacturer’s booklet for more information. The information below is offered as a rough guide only.

Flying:
- If you use a wireless accessory (e.g. Roger Pen, Wireless Mini Microphone, Personal Listener / FM device) with your hearing aid this accessory must be turned off whilst on the plane – however you can leave your hearing aids switched on.

Pacemakers and other implanted medical devices:
- If you have an implanted medical device you must check with your doctor whether it is safe to use a wireless hearing aid. In general most devices are fine, but the manufacturer may advise you to keep the hearing aids and any wireless accessories a certain distance away from the site of the implant at all times. If you experience any problems with your implanted device stop using the CROS aids immediately and contact your doctor.

Water:
- Avoid getting the hearing aids wet – take the aids off when bathing or showering, make sure your hair is fully dry before putting the aid on again especially after swimming.

9. Further sources of help and information

Phonak Website (hearing aid manufacturer):

The Acoustic Neuroma and Meningioma Network (AMNET):
http://www.amnet-charity.org.uk/

British Acoustic Neuroma Association (BANA):
https://www.bana-uk.com/
Other leaflets are available directly from the Audiology Department.

Or, on the Audiology pages of the Addenbrooke’s Website:
http://www.cuh.org.uk/audiology

- Communication tactics
- Hearing aid accessories
- Assistive listening devices (ALDs)
- Local hearing help sessions (for local battery issuing and retubing)

If you need to make an appointment please contact:
Audiology Department
Clinic 10, Box 94
Addenbrooke’s Hospital
Hills Road
Cambridge
CB2 0QQ
Tel: 01223 217797 (Audiology Reception)
www.cuh.org.uk/audiology

If you have any comments or suggestions about this leaflet or your experience(s) with your hearing loss / hearing aids / appointments please write to the address above (for attention of 'The SSD Team'), or email:
audiology@addenbrookes.nhs.uk (put FAO ‘SSD Team’ in subject field).

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team:
patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

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