

M & M

Mills & McKinney
Hearing Practice



Why two hearing aids are better than one

When it comes to hearing, two ears are more than twice as good as one! If your hearing loss is similar in both ears, we strongly recommended that you use two hearing aids unless there are specific contraindications. The reasons for using two hearing aids are outlined below.

Better hearing in noisy conditions



- Less effect of background noise on speech intelligibility
- Ability to “tune in” to one specific voice, and suppress others (known as the “Cocktail party effect”)
- Ability to understand speech in noisier conditions than when wearing only one hearing aid

The hearing system works best when it has similar input from both ears. This allows it to compare the signals from both ears, and extract a wanted sound (e.g. speech) from unwanted sounds (e.g. background noise). Your brain is extremely good at doing this.

Telling the direction of sound

RITE aids will fit most degrees of hearing loss, however if your hearing loss is more severe we may need to fit a larger and more powerful receiver, and use a custom earpiece. At your assessment we will discuss various options with you, and always try to reach the most acceptable solution for you.



Quieter hearing aids

If two hearing aids are fitted, each can be set at a lower volume level than if just one hearing aid is used. This makes for more comfortable listening.

Better and more natural sound quality

Balanced hearing improves overall speech clarity and helps you to appreciate all the full, rich dimensions of sound. Think of the difference in quality between mono- and stereo sound.



Prevent auditory deprivation

If your hearing is similar in both ears, but only one is fitted with a hearing aid, the ear fitted with the hearing aid will gradually get better at processing speech, but the unaided ear may lose some of its ability to process speech. This process is called "Auditory Deprivation".

However, provided the ear is not left without a hearing aid for too long, it is still possible in some cases to restore speech intelligibility in the unaided ear completely or partially by fitting a second hearing aid.

The time taken for auditory deprivation to occur varies from person to person, but on average takes 4 years. Research indicates that it is important to fit the second hearing aid within around one year of deprivation taking place. This suggests that, on average, you will get best results from wearing two hearing aids if they are fitted within 5 years of each other.

Please note

If you have only worn one hearing aid ear for some time, and are having a second hearing aid fitted, it may take you some time to get used to the second hearing aid. Therefore it may be some time (maybe a few months) before you can take advantage of the benefits of two hearing aids.

People who have only worn one hearing aid for many years report that fitting a second hearing aid gives a very different quality of sound compared to wearing only one hearing aid. This can cause interference, and may actually make things more difficult. If this is the case, it is unlikely that you will be able to use two hearing aids successfully.

If you have single sided deafness (i.e. a significant hearing loss on one side with good hearing on the other side) it is possible to give some sensation of sound on the "deaf" side by fitting a hearing aid that routes sound from the bad ear to the good ear. This is called a CROS (contralateral routing of sound) hearing aid.

Even if the hearing loss is symmetrical, one ear may be much worse at processing speech than the other. Speech Audiometry, where the clinician will play lists of words to you through headphones and ask you to repeat what you hear, can test whether making sounds louder with a hearing aid will make them clearer for you. If you have poor speech discrimination then making sounds louder with a hearing aid will not improve your ability to understand speech – sounds get louder, but not clearer. Bi-CROS hearing aids (a CROS hearing aid with amplification on the better side) can be useful for these types of hearing loss – sound from the poor side is routed to the good side.

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