Caring for Your In-the-Ear Hearing Aids

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In-the-ear (ITE) hearing aids are a style of instrument that encompasses the ITE, in-the-canal (ITC), and completely-in-the-canal (CIC) aid types. All of these are custom made to fit each individual user, and are programmed to that user's loss and lifestyle needs.

Custom made ITE instruments require daily maintenance to prevent damage and repair. Due to the close placement of the loud speaker (receiver) to wax and moisture from the ear canal, there is a greater likelihood of wax and moisture buildup causing hearing aid dysfunction. If your aid appears to be weak, distorted, or dead, a simple cleaning and dehumidifying may fix the problem.

Special care must be taken when maintaining your ITE. Never use unapproved liquids, such as water, to clean your ITE. Some alcohol based liquid cleaners are available for purchase to clean hearing aids, but talk with your audiologist before using one. Irreversible damage could occur.

Cleaning tools were probably included with your hearing aid. If not, ask your provider where you can get them. To clean your ITE properly, you will need a soft cloth, wax pick or loop, a long plastic filament wax tool, and a soft toothbrush.

First, holding the aid down and away from you, take the wax pick or loop (usually plastic or wire) and gently pick any wax or debris from the sound opening that fits into your ear canal. Pick in a downward motion, careful not to press too deeply. Deep insertion of this tool may dislodge or damage the receiver (loudspeaker).

Taking the brush, gently brush off any debris from the outer casing. This is especially important around the microphones and sound openings. Microphone placements vary, but are typically small round openings near the battery door. Ask your provider to point out the locations of your microphones. Even a little buildup on your microphones can affect the sound quality.

Next, you will clean the opening that runs from the outer face to the portion that fits into your ear. This is called the vent. Your hearing aid may not have a vent or the vent may be plugged with a small rubbery stopper. Ask your provider about your hearing aid's vent. Run the long filament completely through the vent from the outside casing (where the battery door is located) to the opening near the sound opening.

Finally, using the clean dry soft cloth, wipe down the outside of your hearing aid. Over time, your hearing aid may become discolored from wax and oils. This discoloration may not be reversible. However, as long as the casing is intact and kept clean and the sound quality of your aid is up to standards, there should be no issues.

Daily or at least weekly maintain your ITE hearing aid, and you will reduce your need for repairs and keep your hearing aid in top notch working condition!

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Kamal Elliot, Au.D. Doctor of Audiology a Dr. Elliot is a licensed Audiologist who earned her Doctor of Audiology degree from the University of Florida and has been practicing since 1994. Dr. Elliot has over 17 years of experience and she brings a wealth of knowledge in audiology and a hearing aid services. She is dedicated and committed to continuing to provide quality hearing care to you and the entire Sun City Center, Florida and Hillsborough County community.

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