

# The Hearing Fitness Guide



**bloom**<sup>™</sup>  
hearing specialists

# What does Hearing Fitness mean?

Unless you are someone who has always exercised regularly, you'll have noticed that your physical fitness is no longer at the level you enjoyed as a teenager. It is not something you notice straight away, but more a gradual process that happens day by day.

Hearing loss is similar in some ways. It stems from a gradual deterioration of certain cells in the body, and it happens so slowly as to be virtually unnoticeable. Therefore, just as running for a bus was easier when we were younger, the ability to hear certain sounds and frequencies may be harder now than it was several years ago.

Also, just as we may injure a limb, or have an illness with long-term effect, our hearing can be damaged by events and noisy environments.

This guide sets out really as a checklist; a reminder of some aspects of our lives and lifestyles that we can manage and, in so doing, manage damaging effects on our hearing – and perhaps even put off the day when we might need hearing aids.

**For more help and advice on keeping your hearing fitter – or if you have a particular hearing impairment that you feel is at a stage where it needs to be addressed – call us free on 0800 612 7988 for peace of mind and a free consultation.**

*The bloom™ hearing specialists'  
Hearing Fitness Team*



# Common causes of hearing loss

## Ear wax (Cerumen)

A common occurrence and removal of the wax removes the hearing loss.

To find out more, see page 6.

## Noise

Constant noise or sudden excessive sound like an explosion can attribute to a hearing loss over time.

Even with regular use of ear protection, now compulsory in work places where sounds are in excess of 80dB, a person may experience a certain level of loss if continuously exposed to noise.

Music concerts and personal music players are now seen as a potential cause of hearing loss.

## Illness

Ear infections such as otitis media (*which affects the middle ear*) or exostoses (*also called "surfer's ear"*) can contribute to hearing loss if not treated in a timely manner.

The ear may also be subject to other serious medical conditions that block the ear canal and prevents a person from hearing clearly.

## Ageing (Presbycusis)

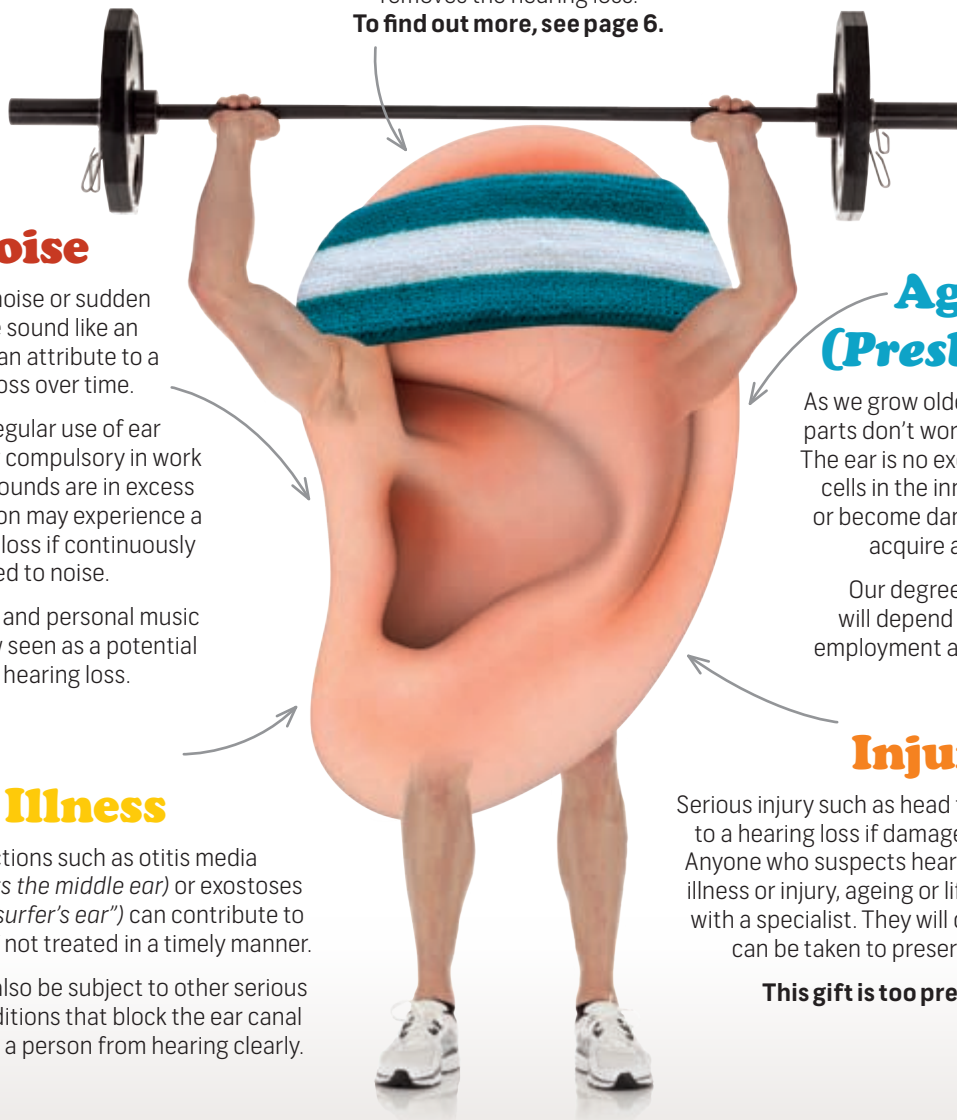
As we grow older, some of our body parts don't work as well as they did. The ear is no exception as the nerve cells in the inner ear fail to react or become damaged and we then acquire a hearing loss.

Our degree of hearing loss will depend on our lifestyles, employment and medical history.

## Injury

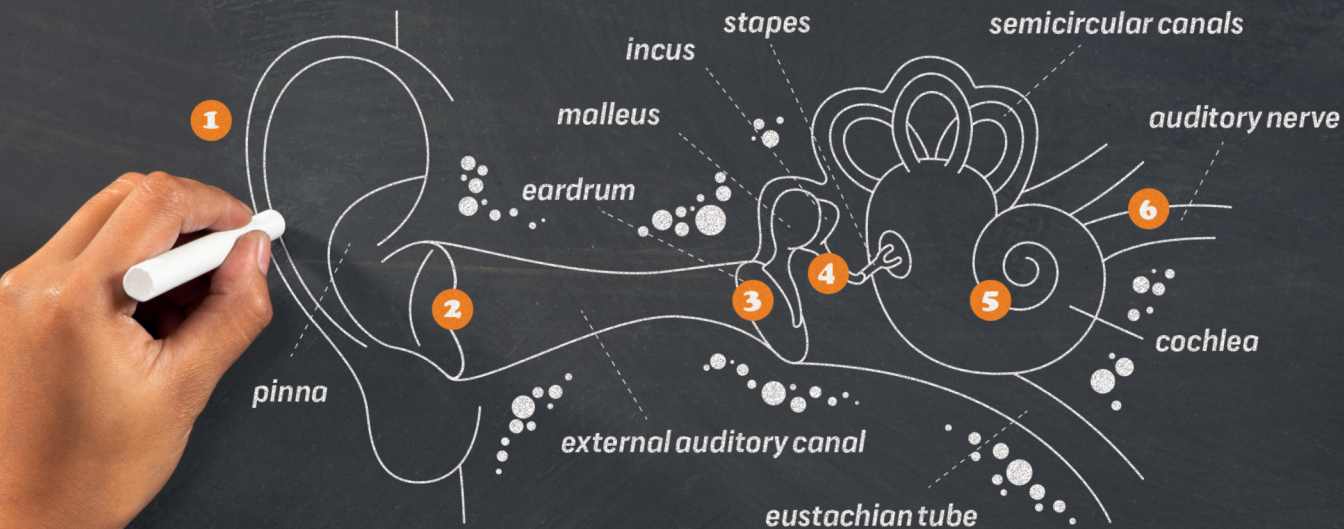
Serious injury such as head trauma may contribute to a hearing loss if damage is caused to the ear. Anyone who suspects hearing loss brought on by illness or injury, ageing or lifestyle should consult with a specialist. They will determine what steps can be taken to preserve hearing ability.

**This gift is too precious to lose.**





# Understanding how we hear



- 1** Sound creates vibrations in the air, similar to the rippling waves created when a stone is thrown into a pond.
- 2** The outer-ear "trumpet" collects these sound waves and they are funnelled down the external ear canal to the eardrum.
- 3** As the sound waves strike the eardrum, they cause it to vibrate.
- 4** The vibrations are transmitted through the middle ear over the bony bridge formed by the malleus, incus and stapes. These vibrations, in turn, cause the membranes over the openings to the inner ear to vibrate, causing the fluid in the inner ear to be set in motion.
- 5** The motion of the fluid in the inner ear excites the nerve hair cells in the organ of Corti, producing electrochemical impulses
- 6** These impulses are gathered together and transmitted by the auditory nerve to the brain, where we experience the sensation of hearing.

## Did you know?

The smallest bones in the body are the malleus (hammer), incus (anvil) and stapes (stirrup)

The "roar" you hear when you place a seashell next to your ear is the sound of blood surging through the veins in the ear, and not the ocean waves!

The cochlea is encased in the body's hardest bone

# The effects of hearing loss

Virtually no other condition in medicine can have such a profound effect on quality of life as even moderate hearing loss in some people. *Hearing loss makes even routine communication difficult.*

High frequency hearing loss often involves you losing the ability to hear consonants like s, f, t and z, even though vowels can be still be heard normally.

Consequently, this means that people hear but cannot make out what is being said and accuse people of mumbling.

This may result in frustration, withdrawal from social activities, depression and marital discord. People lose the ability to take in sounds like bird songs, rustling of leaves and the voices of children.

Although in some circumstances the loss of quality of life can be overcome by medical intervention in most cases this is not possible and a personally prescribed hearing system is the best solution.

When hearing loss occurs early in childhood, its devastating consequences are more obvious than when it occurs late in life. A hearing deficit in infants can interfere with psychological, emotional and speech development. It also makes learning a mammoth task and can cause frustration or isolation.

**If you would like to discuss how hearing aids could help you, or a loved one, call us today on freephone 0800 612 7988.**

## Did you know?

It's estimated that up to two-thirds of young people may face permanent hearing loss if they continue to listen to their music too loud and for too long. The World Health Organization has said listening to music through earphones for more than an hour at 85dB (decibels) or above can damage your hearing.

But Action On Hearing Loss' research found that, out of 100 MP3 users, 72 listened to volume levels of 85dB and higher. Their "Loud Music" campaign targets 16-30 year olds and aims to prevent people from damaging their hearing through over exposure to loud music through music players and at festivals, gigs and nightclubs.

By increasing awareness of the dangers of over exposure to loud music in a fun and relevant way, Action On Hearing Loss aims to make people more aware of the warning signs that could point to a hearing loss or tinnitus, such as ringing or dull hearing.

**For more information visit:**  
**[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)**



# Earwax

## What is earwax?

While maybe not on everybody's lips (although it is thought that this is what the earliest lip balms were made from), earwax plays an important role in keeping your ears healthy!

Earwax, also known as cerumen, helps protect the ear against bacteria and foreign materials such as dirt and dust. It is also good at repelling water while at the same time keeping the ear canal lubricated.

The quantity produced varies greatly between individuals but hard wax is most common amongst the elderly and those who wear hearing aids.

For many people, earwax does not cause a problem to their daily lives, although it may need to be removed to take an impression of the ear canal for new hearing aid moulds.

## Signs of excessive earwax are:

- Loss of hearing over a few months
- Your own voice sounds as if it's inside your head
- Tinnitus (buzzing/constant high pitched sound)
- Hearing aids whistle for no reason

## Treatment

Ear drops and products like Earol (shown here) are often considered to be the first line of treatment for excessive wax build up.

If these do not work then the best and safest alternative is micro-suction as, compared to traditional forms of wax removal, it is more effective and sometimes doesn't require pre-treatment with ear drops.

A specialist will look into the ear canal using a microscope and a very fine suction device at low pressure is used to remove the wax.

You can have your ears cleared by micro-suction by the NHS. Your GP will advise you whether this is available in your area.

Alternatively you can have your ears treated with us because, as dedicated hearing specialists, micro-suction is just one of the many services we offer to get you hearing better again.



**Don't try and clean your ears with cotton wool buds!**

Not only are you likely to make matters worse by pushing the earwax deeper into the ear, you also run the risk of causing an infection or damaging your ear canal or eardrum.

**For more advice on maintaining healthy ears call us today free on 0800 612 7988.**

# Tinnitus

Unlike other afflictions of the ear, tinnitus is not a disease but the perception of sound where there is no corresponding external source. While the precise cause of tinnitus is unknown, contributing factors include infection of the ear, wax build-up/foreign objects in the ear, medication side effects and the natural deterioration of hearing caused simply by the ageing process. The most common cause however is noise-induced hearing loss.

Tinnitus can affect anyone across all age groups. It is estimated that about 10% of the population suffer continuously with a mild form of tinnitus and around 1% of adults find that it affects their quality of life.

## What can be done to help tinnitus?

Too often the answer is "I'm afraid there's no cure and nothing can be done". This is simply not true as there are a number of treatments that can help, including:

### Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

This is used to retrain the way in which you think and so change your behaviour. If you have tinnitus then you may have certain ideas about it that make you distressed, but if these are incorrect then changing them may help to reduce your stress.

### Tinnitus Retraining Therapy

TRT uses sound therapy and counselling to retrain the brain in how it responds to tinnitus so you become less aware of it.

### Sound Therapy

Tinnitus is most prominent during quiet periods (such as at night) so to "mask" this other sounds are introduced. Sometimes just the TV, radio or a "white noise" sound generator is enough. However some people find a hearing aid can be very effective, with some products having a sound generator built in.



## Relax and unwind!

One of the most common factors involved with tinnitus is stress. By using relaxation techniques, such as muscle relaxation, deep breathing and mental imagery, you can reduce stress levels and help manage tinnitus.



**To see if a hearing aid could help you, call us on Freephone 0800 612 7988 today.**

# What to DO

## DO have an initial Hearing Test to establish if you have a hearing loss and if it needs to be treated

Believe it or not, it's having the initial hearing assessment that it is the most important. Why is this?

The reason is that it demonstrates that you place importance in hearing clearly. And that you may decide to do something about it if significant hearing loss is revealed.

Treat your hearing the same as you might other aspects of your general health. For example, to keep an eye on your weight you weigh yourself regularly; if there is a history of high blood pressure in the family, you check that periodically; you may have routine dental check-ups and eye tests.

It may be that your hearing is near perfect, is slightly below par, or needs immediate correction so that you hear naturally again. Initial hearing tests provide you with a starting point. And peace of mind.

## DO make it a routine annual check-up – just like your dental check and eye test

If you are over 50, and suspect that your hearing is already affected by occupation or illness, a test every two years should be enough. Loss of hearing can be quite gradual, and barely noticeable in most cases, over a short time span.

*(Note: If you experience sudden loss of hearing, you should consult your GP immediately.)*

How do you decide? Place yourself in the hands of a hearing specialist. Your GP can arrange for a quick screening. But if you do not wish to rely on the NHS you can ask for one of our hearing aid audiologists to carry out a more thorough test – still free of charge.

From that point on, your bloom™ hearing specialist can, at your request, manage the process for you by setting up periodic hearing assessments tailored to your individual circumstances.





# **DO consult your GP in the event of sudden hearing loss**

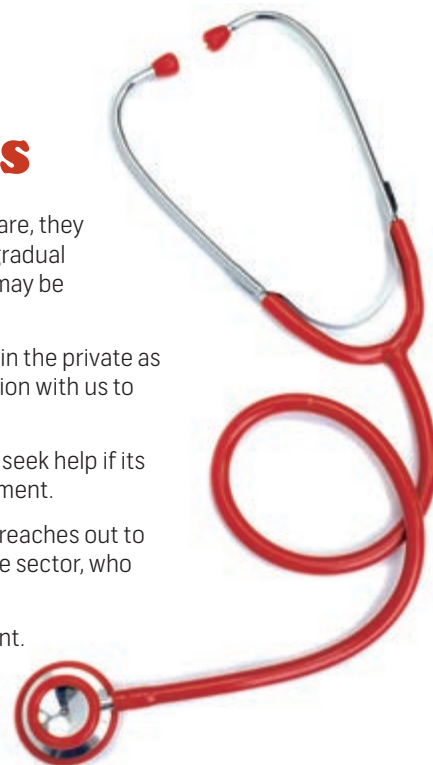
The concerns for sudden loss need to be addressed immediately. Whilst they are relatively rare, they may be attributable to other health issues and medical conditions separate from the more gradual loss that occurs with ageing. Obvious causes, such as exposure to exceptionally loud noise may be understandable. Help should still be sought for these.

In some cases, tinnitus may be a longer term symptom for which, again, help can be at hand in the private as well as public sector healthcare. If you have tinnitus then do request an initial free consultation with us to discuss options to manage its effects.

Tinnitus affects some 10% of the population and depending on its severity, you may wish to seek help if its level affects your enjoyment of life in general. It can also be accompanied by hearing impairment.

The British Tinnitus Association (BTA) is a charity that, through their awareness campaigns, reaches out to those seeking help. This is very often endorsed by reputable hearing specialists in the private sector, who may offer a variety of solutions.

Hearing aids can be used as sound therapy devices whether a hearing loss is, or is not present. Sound therapy devices can be very successful in reducing the effects of tinnitus and aiding relaxation.



## **DO look after your ears with routine management of excess wax**

A common cause of apparent deafness can often be no more than excess earwax. Wax is ever-present and we all have it – we have to have it – but wax built up does have its downside. It can be easily treated using solutions such as olive oil, which you can apply yourself.

Routinely applied it can prevent excess build up. In severe cases – such as really blocked ears – see your GP or speak to us. Whatever you do, don't poke things in your ear to try to clear it. The routine use of olive oil can lead to the wax "clearing itself".

The alternative is irrigation by a nurse at the local GP or by micro-suction, which is a service that we can provide.

**Comparing your ability to hear at 30 years old – at 45 – at 55 – then at 60, and you might be amazed at the difference. Annual hearing assessments from at least 55 often pinpoint when it is time to do something about restoring your hearing quality.**

**Call us free on 0800 612 7988 to find out more!**

# What NOT to do

## **DON'T work in noisy environments without suitable protection.**

Seek advice from your employer on noise levels and controls to avoid hearing damage. Most responsible employers involving noisy work environments will offer protection as a matter of course. But do establish the level of potential damage by finding out what decibel levels exist, to ensure that the issues for hearing impairment are adequately addressed.

Damage may arise from noise levels as well as frequencies, from overall background noise as well as sudden bursts of noise from impact-related processes.

Some employers may even arrange for annual hearing checks for vulnerable employees. Find out and, if not provided, ensure that you take it upon yourself to book yourself annual appointments. We can diary this for you, free of charge, and organize it for you.

## **DON'T expose yourself to prolonged noise in the home.**

Invest in ear defenders if you expect to engage in noisy DIY projects at home. Tolerance to noise may vary from one person to another which, ironically, may depend on whether or not they already suffer a hearing loss!

**The best advice we can give is for you to consider the decibel levels shown below.**

Don't spend too long vacuum cleaning or in town centre traffic, and consider ear defenders for any activity above those in noise levels.



**DON'T engage in riding motorbikes, driving continuously with the window open or any other noisy activity, without considering the effect on your hearing**

Competitors engaged in clay pigeon shooting or live quarry also share this risk. Again, protection ranging from earplugs, custom fit solutions, and ear defenders are available.



**Excessive exposure to sounds over 85dB could cause hearing loss!**



## **DON'T over-indulge in drug-related activities**

Heavy smoking, too much caffeine, even some medications such as aspirin – can have adverse effects on hearing. Of course it's a matter of degree. Whilst we would never encourage you to smoke, it would be unreasonable to expect you to give up drinking tea and coffee, or taking aspirin, unless your GP strongly recommended that you do.

Some of these products and medications have also been cited as possible causes for tinnitus. So as far as a management regime is concerned, all we can say is to use moderation. Causes of deafness are areas for clinical research so more definitive views on "lifestyle causes" such as this will undoubtedly emerge in time.

For now, however, consider it as one piece of advice that, if applied, may have other beneficial effects to your general health, as well as to your hearing.

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## **DON'T forget to use earplugs if you ride a motorbike**

Riding a motorbike is not in the above list – but it is definitely an activity for which you should consider earplugs – even with your helmet on. And of course this applies also to similar "machinery", at work and play, which gives out a similar level of decibels.

Earplugs need not be expensive; you can buy disposable ones; and you can even invest extra to have some moulded and custom fit to your ears.

And don't forget your pillion rider. For that reason, extra sets of disposables are a good idea to keep in your toolbox.



## **DON'T forget to apply Earol Swim if you swim regularly**

The ongoing benefits of applying olive oil based solutions – such as Earol – to the ear canal to manage excess earwax, is well known. Not so widely promoted are ways to address – or even avoid – "swimmer's ear".

That's the condition when water appears to be trapped inside the ear, affecting your hearing. This can be corrected by having your ears irrigated at your local GP practice.

A much better approach is to try to prevent it happening in the first place – especially when a trip to your local GP may not be practical. Earol Swim – a combination of pharmaceutical grade olive oil and tea tree oil – can be the answer as spraying this into your ear creates a water resistant barrier to the auditory canal.

It also includes antifungal, antibacterial, antiviral and anti-infection properties.



## **DON'T listen to recorded music through earphones and headphones unless they are good quality, and at moderate volumes**

There is an argument that headphones – those that fit over the ear – can be less harmful than earphones that are wedged IN the ear. Talk to us for a more detailed view on this but again we must say that moderation is a key factor (e.g. see the guidelines on decibel levels earlier). Headphones have almost become a fashion statement, with a range of colours available to suit your preference. But don't be guided by cosmetic qualities alone.

Some headphones may be controlled so that they cannot deliver harmful levels of sound – but common sense is the best solution. Key specifications are given on all quality headphone brands and, if you are in any doubt, consult a specialist in store or check the manufacturer website.

Note: For hearing aid wearers, some new technology can facilitate recorded music, TV and radio to be streamed direct to them. Ask a hearing specialist for a demonstration.

## **DON'T listen to loud music too long at concerts**

Unlike music through headphones, you have no real control over the volume at live events – unless, that is, you position yourself well away from the source, or speakers.

Musicians – from Beethoven to Pete Townshend of The Who – suffer, often in the form of tinnitus. But actual hearing loss is often a problem later on in musician's careers, as the sensitive sensory mechanisms within the ear are damaged by loud noise.

Remedies can be simple and inexpensive – the equivalent to earplugs designed to filter and suppress loud noise, whilst still allowing you to hear. They may help you if you regularly attend concerts.

Professional musicians, however, might consider custom-made, custom-fit equivalents.



**Taking positive steps to avoid problems later on can begin in teenage years.  
Being aware of the dangers you face in everyday life and work is key.**

# Diet and food

As we know, our diets affect our body, its development and maintenance more than anything else. A healthy diet that includes zinc, calcium and vitamin D can certainly prevent or slow specific types of hearing loss.

In our recipe for a delicious Salmon and Broccoli Bake, the broccoli contains calcium that will help keep your bones strong (your ear is made up of many tiny bones) and the vitamin D found in the salmon will help your body absorb the calcium.



Tastes fantastic!

## Salmon and Broccoli Bake

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 190C/gas 5 and get out an ovenproof dish (20 x 30cm, and about 5cm deep). Put a large pan of water on to boil for the pasta. When it is boiling rapidly, tip in the pasta with a generous sprinkling of salt. Stir, return to the boil and cook for 6 minutes. Add broccoli, then return water to the boil and cook for 4 minutes more, until the broccoli is on the firm side of just tender. Drain well.
2. While the pasta is cooking, put the butter, flour and milk in a large pan and heat, whisking or stirring continuously, until it thickens to make a smooth sauce. Remove from heat and stir in the mascarpone, sun-dried tomatoes, capers, anchovies and basil, then add the pasta and broccoli and season well.
3. Halve the salmon fillets widthways (you will see that there is an obvious divide on each fillet) then place in a single layer on the base of the ovenproof dish. Spoon the broccoli mixture on top, then scatter with the grated cheddar. (You can chill this for up to 4 hours if you want to get ahead.)
4. Bake for 30 minutes until the mixture is just starting to bubble round the edges and the mixture is pale golden – don't let it go too dark or the fish will overcook!

### Ingredients

250g penne  
300g broccoli, cut into large florets  
25g butter  
25g plain flour  
600ml milk  
100g mascarpone  
8 anchovy fillets, halved (optional)  
8 sundried tomatoes (preserved in olive oil), drained and thickly sliced  
2 tbsps small capers (optional) rinsed to remove excess salt or vinegar  
10 large fresh basil leaves, roughly torn  
4 fresh skinless salmon fillets  
50g mature cheddar, finely grated



# Wireless hearing aid technology

While wireless technology has been available for some time in the form of remote controls, recent developments in hearing aid technology can now enable wireless connectivity to a wide range of devices like TVs and mobile phones.

## Connecting to your TV

If you are having difficulty in hearing the TV, especially if there is noise around you like people talking, then wireless technology can help you.

In most instances, a small box or streamer is attached to the TV and this sends the sound wirelessly either direct to the hearing aids or via a controller (which usually has the ability to control the volume too). Some products also have the ability to turn off the hearing aids' microphones, which means you only hear the sound streamed from the TV and not the sounds around you.

These also work well with other audio sources, such as a stereo or personal music player.

## Connecting to your Phone

Hearing on the phone can be difficult sometimes, more so if you are out and about where there is lots of surrounding noise. With wireless technology, a small remote control can take the sound from the bluetooth compatible phone and send it to the hearing aids. These controllers can also act as the microphone, making them ideal for use in a "hands free" situation, such as when you are driving.



















Like the TV wireless products, some controllers are available that switch off the hearing aid microphones so allowing you to hear better even if in a noisy environment, such as a pub or restaurant.

Some manufacturers also have wireless products that can help you hear better on a landline phone.



**New processes for sound and visual media delivery are inevitably embraced by the younger generation. Nowadays this new technology is at the forefront for restoring hearing quality in older generations.**

# Find the right hearing solution...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One on One Conversations</li><li>• Home Activities</li><li>• Watching TV</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cinema/Theatre</li><li>• Lectures</li><li>• Religious Services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quiet Restaurant</li><li>• Quiet Workplace</li><li>• Small Group (2-4) Conversations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings</li><li>• Public Places</li><li>• Shopping Centre</li></ul>
			
			
			
			
			
			

# with our lifestyle selector!

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Busy Restaurant</li><li>• Family Gathering</li><li>• Large Group (4-10) Conversations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Large Crowds</li><li>• Large Parties</li><li>• Noisy Workplace</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outdoor Activities</li><li>• Sporting Events</li><li>• Windy Places</li></ul>	<p>Which lifestyle group matches yours the best?</p>
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**An important part of hearing better again is finding the right hearing solution for your lifestyle, so this handy chart can help you determine what you need.**

**And with prices starting from as little as £395 you can hear better again for a lot less than you'd thought!**



# Informative websites

The internet contains a wealth of information on hearing health and hearing aids. Sometimes though it's hard to see the wood for the trees so that's why we've highlighted what we feel are informative websites for all hearing related information.

## **[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)**

Formerly known as the RNID, their name was changed in 2011 to Action On Hearing Loss to show that the charity deals with all levels of hearing loss, not just deafness.

Founded in 1911, they provide information and raise awareness of deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus. They have also emerged as a major player in technology and research development, in particular through its work in the area of product development.

Recent developments include a free confidential online hearing check which is also available over the telephone, and can identify potential hearing problems.

## **[www.hearingtimes.co.uk](http://www.hearingtimes.co.uk)**

The Hearing Times website is for deaf and hard of hearing people, their relatives, friends, Hearing Aid Audiologists and professionals in the hearing industry. It is combined with a unique national publication providing the latest news and information on hearing loss and hearing aids.

## **[www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)**

The Health & Care Professions Council is a regulator set up to protect the public. They keep a register of health professionals, including Hearing Aid Audiologists, who meet their standards for training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

## **[www.menieres.org.uk](http://www.menieres.org.uk)**

The Ménière's Society provides information and advice for people suffering from Ménière's disease, and they actively encourage and support research projects related to the cause and treatment of all aspects of the disease.

## **[www.tinnitus.org.uk](http://www.tinnitus.org.uk)**

The British Tinnitus Association (BTA) is a charitable organisation, which aims to be the primary source of support and information for people with tinnitus in the UK. Through a freephone line, website, and regular magazines it helps individuals with tinnitus and the wider public understand more about the condition, coping strategies and raising awareness amongst the general public.



# What should you do next?

The aim of this guide is to provide you with advice and information about hearing health. We trust any future decisions you have to make about your hearing, or of somebody you know, are made easier.

**If you have questions about anything in this guide, or are looking for help on a specific aspect of hearing, then call one of our dedicated experts to get immediate, helpful, professional advice!**



**Call us free on  
0800 612 4917**

to discuss  
**buying a hearing aid**  
and to arrange a  
**free consultation on a  
hearing care issue**



**Call us free on  
0800 612 6230**

to discuss your  
**hearing health needs,**  
for help on **excess earwax,**  
**micro-suction** or advice on  
**hearing protection**



**Call us free on  
0800 612 7988**

to discuss your  
**general hearing  
healthcare queries**  
and to **request further  
information**

**If you suspect a child has a hearing loss, would like to discuss cochlear implants, suffer with vertigo, have a sudden onset of tinnitus or would like an NHS hearing aid then we would advise that you seek initial advice from your GP.**



# Get your ears fighting fit with our Hearing Fitness Guide!

## **So what is our Hearing Fitness National Campaign all about?**

As part of bloom™ hearing specialists' drive to advise and inform those of you who are concerned about potential hearing loss, it aims to help you avoid damage to your hearing.

Let's be clear. Natural deterioration of your hearing cannot be "cured", but control of the environment around you and your lifestyle, or occupation, or what you eat, drink or take as medication, may reduce negative influences.

**Contact bloom™ hearing specialists free on 0800 612 7988 to find the help you may need, locally. Keep your ears fighting fit – and keep your hearing in good shape!**

## **What's covered in the free Guide?**

From common causes for partial deafness, understanding its effects, through to simple management of excess earwax and addressing more serious cases of tinnitus, it covers issues that affect most of us.

It then lists some "what to do and what not to do" activities and approaches to ensure you are not harming your hearing without knowing. This also includes references to how and where you can seek further help, locally or online.

**bloom**<sup>™</sup>  
hearing specialists

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This guide is not intended to be a replacement for medical advice available from your GP or similarly professionally qualified sources for the various conditions covered.