

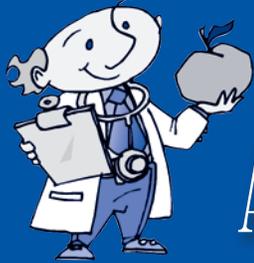
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# “Have You Heard?”

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**Open 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday**



## Ask Your Audiologist

**Q. What is a memory switch? Will it help me remember why I came into the kitchen?**

**A.** I used to know all about the hearing aid memory switch but I forgot! I've never been able to resist the easy wise crack. OK so here's the straight story. Most of the hearing aids that have been purchased in the last 10 years have a little push button called either a memory switch or a program selector. Digital hearing aids, which I believe all of you are wearing, allow the audiologist to create settings that change the way your hearing aids process sound in specific situations that are causing you difficulty. Nearly all of you have an automatic program in your hearing aids. This is the default setting when your hearing aids first turn on. In the perfect world, the automatic program allows the hearing aid to adapt to the wide variety of listening conditions you experience just the way you want them to. Hearing aid processors have become increasingly sophisticated at adapting to challenging acoustics and self adjusting so you don't have to do anything. Generally speaking, as the hearing aid becomes more expensive, the processor is better

able to adapt to more diverse and challenging situations. However, it is not a perfect world and even the most sophisticated hearing aids do not always behave the way we wish they would. This is where the memory switch comes in handy.

We create special settings for hearing aids on an “as needed” basis. For example, if you are struggling with the telephone we may make a program for that purpose. So, when you answer the phone, you press the memory switch and the hearing aid will make the phone sound better. Another example is having a special setting to shut out more background noise or perhaps wind. Everyone has different situations that affect their ability to hear. Once these are identified we can try to improve things beyond what the automatic program can do.

How many settings can you have with your memory switch? That depends on the model of hearing aid. The basic models allow for 3 memories. The most sophisticated models allow for more than I can count or remember. It can get really confusing if you have too many settings in your hearing aid. So, we want to keep it as simple as possible for you.

Two final thoughts. Most current model hearing aids allow us to synchronize the memory switches. This means if you press the button on one aid the other aid changes too! That is really cool. If your hearing aids have volume controls, we can synchronize them too. Second thought, the best situation is when you don't need a memory switch. That means your hearing aids are so good at adapting to your needs you don't need special features. (We're still working on that one.) Even if you have a memory switch, it doesn't do anything if you don't remember to press it!

## Update Priority Health - Epic Plan

We are a participating provider with Priority Health. In the spring newsletter, we mentioned changes with Priority Health hearing aid coverage. Some people with Priority have had their hearing aid benefit subcontracted to a group called Epic Hearing aids. We were initially informed that the only way to use this benefit was to go to an Epic provider, which we are not. We have since learned that at least in some cases you can still use your benefit in our office if you get a form from them to submit the claim yourself. One of our very helpful patients told us that she received a letter from Priority in April informing her of these changes that went into effect in January. She was very unhappy and let them know. She found that she could file a grievance with Priority by calling **888-389-6648**. If this makes you unhappy with Priority, please let them know. We want to continue to be your audiologists. If you don't know if any of this applies to you, we are happy to check on the requirements of your plan if you call us at 269-324-0555.



## MOISTURE RESISTANCE

We used to tell our patients that hearing aids hate water. Nothing would shut down a hearing aid quicker than a dip in the pool. (Unless you count a quick chomp by Fido.) Hearing aid malfunctions used to go through the roof in the summer. Not so much anymore. The manufacturers we work with all apply a special nano coating to the components and seal any openings of the devices that go behind the ear. They test each model of hearing aid to determine its resistance to dust and water. An IP (ingress protection) rating is then assigned to the model. For example, a hearing aid may have a rating of IP 6/7 which means no dust can get into the case and no water will enter the case for at least 30 minutes at a depth of 1 meter. (How long can you hold your breath?) The custom in-the-ear products (those are the ones without a piece behind your ear) aren't as moisture resistant but still should stand

up to a bit of splashing. The important point here is that hearing aids have become much more water resistant and you should not panic if you get a little wet. None of the manufacturers certifies their aids to be water proof. We do not recommend testing fate and intentionally immersing your hearing aids. We also suggest that if you are doing dirty sweaty work that you leave them in their case.

So what should you do if you notice your shower seems really loud but don't realize it's because you still have your hearing aids on until your head is under the water? If it is still working as usual, don't do anything. If it stopped working, dry it off. Look at the tubing (if it has an ear mold) for water bubbles and clear them out. We use a can of forced air. Change the wax trap, if it has one. If the aid sounds good at that point, you are good to go. If it still is not working, remove the battery and let the aid set with the door wide open. Do not put it in the microwave. This will destroy your hearing aid. You could put it in a drying unit designed for hearing aids or even in a sealed container with rice. If the aid sounds good in the morning, it is probably fine. If these things don't revive the aid, or if you want to be sure it's OK, we'll be happy to check it over for you and apply CPR if needed. Our manufacturers are very good about handling moisture related repairs under the warranty.



## A Tale of Two Doctor's Offices

Recently, I had 2 very different experiences in health care offices that I wanted to share with you. I'll bet they sound familiar

At 8:00 a.m. I had an appointment in a physician's office. As I approached the reception desk the young lady sitting behind the counter barely raised her head and whispered "mumblemumblemumble". I assumed she wanted my name, which I provided. She responded "mumblemumblemumble, have a seat". Hmm, guess I gave her the right information. Ten minutes later another young lady opened the door to the inner sanctum and called my name. As I approached her, she dipped her head into my chart and said "mumblemumblemumble", turned and walked away. OK, I'm supposed to follow her. She begins talking as she's walking away, again "mumblemumblemumble". This time I choose not to respond. Then I hear loud and clear, "... birth date". OK, I got this one. I know they have to ask this, but 3-4 times in one visit??? Are you ever tempted to give the wrong date to see if they are paying attention? I'll bet there are times when I give my birth date when they are asking for something else. Finally the exam room. The same medical assistant proceeds to ask me questions with her head turned away from me as she writes in the chart. Sometimes I tell them I can't hear very well if they don't look at me. Sometimes, I'm passive aggressive and just sit until they turn around and repeat the question. (I'll bet there are some interesting notes about me in the chart.) Finally, the physician assistant arrives. She looks directly at me and we have a very easy exchange. (Maybe the other gal warned her about the ornery old guy behind door #3.) I am declared healthy for now and discharged.

At 9:00 a.m. I have an appointment at the dentist office. As I enter the office, the receptionist looks up and very clearly says, "Hi John. How are you this morning? It will be just a few minutes." We have a brief easy chat. Sure enough, in a few minutes the dental assistant arrives, looks at me and says, "are you ready John?" She walks beside me and we talk on the way to door #2. Shortly, my dentist arrives. He sits beside me and we catch up a little before he puts his mask on. Uh oh, the mask. That could be really bad... no visual cues and muffled voice from the mask. Fortunately, he has a deep clear voice and it's not a problem for me. It helps that he's only a foot away from my ear. Now, in fairness, I've been going to this office for longer than I can remember and we know each other pretty well. That does help in the ease of communication. As we are finishing up, I ask him if many patients have trouble hearing him during their visit. He said only a few. (I'll bet a few more than he realizes.) I asked how he handles that. He said when he talks to them he removes his mask and looks right at them. Dingdingdingding! Right answer!

Obviously, two very different experiences. I make light of the situation, but getting your healthcare information accurately is a big deal. The best hearing aids in the world (there must be such a thing, because I just saw an advertisement that said they have the best and it's \$1000 off this month only) aren't going to be adequate if the doctor does not talk to you. I think it's gotten even worse as some providers are struggling to use electronic medical records and appear to be more intent on the keyboard of their computer than me. I generally will let them know that I don't hear well if they look away when they are talking to me. I will ask "soft talkers" to speak up. I recommend you do the same. For those of you with severe hearing loss, make sure they know of your hearing loss. You might consider taking someone with you. Written recommendations are really good. Those who communicate with sign language should make arrangements for an interpreter.

# HEARING SERVICES & SYSTEMS

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