

CLEANING A MOLD

Cleaning the mold is always a problem for the new users. Each day when you remove the aid, wipe the outside clean with a tissue. Some people have a particular problem with wax in the ears clogging the mold and those people must pay special attention that the wax isn't preventing sound from getting through. If you can remove the mold from the aid, you can wash it in soap and warm water, but always be sure to dry it thoroughly before you put it back on the aid. Run a **pipe cleaner** through it or simply blow through it to be sure it is dry. If you are worried about cleaning it yourself or removing it from your aid, take it to your hearing aid dealer and ask him to clean it for you. Commercial earmold cleaning preparations are available through your hearing aid dealer if you wish to try them. Soap and warm water continue to be excellent cleaning agents. Some places, including some hearing aid dealers, have ultrasonic devices for cleaning molds for you. Such devices are even available for home use but they are expensive. (approximately forty dollars.)

When do you replace an earmold?

How often to replace the earmold is an individual matter. The ear is always changing in shape and size. Obviously a child's ear grows with the rest of his body and his mold should be checked every six months to determine if a new mold is indicated. How often it needs to be changed will depend upon how quickly his ears are growing. Even as an adulthood, changes continue to take place but usually with less rapidity. An adult should have his mold checked every year or, at most every two years to determine if a new mold is needed. In addition to the ear changing its shape, the mold itself can change shape especially if it is one of the softer materials. If your mold has been discolored and has hardened, its shape has undoubtedly changed and you should consider obtaining a new mold.

Many things can go wrong if the mold doesn't fit well. You may find that you have an "echo" when you speak. This could be due to a mold which is too loose and vibrates when you talk. You may find that you cannot turn the volume of the aid as high as you would like because the aid whistles or squeals. You may be getting distortion of sound which is due to a poorly fitting mold.

When a whistle or squeal is coming from the hearing aid, it is called feedback. It occurs when sound is escaping from around the earmold and

feeding back into the aid. If you find that your earmold whistles when you chew or when you turn your head, it is time to think about getting a new, better fitting mold. The mold is not always the fault but it is a frequent source of the problem and should be checked when feedback occurs.

Remember that the earmold is a very important component in your amplifying system. Be certain your mold fits well and has been chosen to give you the best response from your hearing aid. Keep your mold clean and replace it as frequently as it needs to be replaced. It is penny wise and pound foolish to have a good aid and a poor mold.

The most common problem with earmolds is a poorly-fitting one. Children grow quickly and need to have earmolds replaced often - during the first year, every two months. At age two, replace molds every four months. By the time the child is five years old, new earmolds may only be required every 9 - 12 months. Keeping your child's hearing aids in good working order is more than just turning down the volume until there is no feedback (or squeal).

Sometimes parents feel that if a mold is NEW, it must be good. If it has feedback at the setting your audiologist advises, it is not good and should be remade at no cost. Be sure to ask for a remake before one month is up.