

New Waterproof Hearing Aids

***A review and tips from Dr. Todd Landsberg,
Alport syndrome patient and audiologist***

Hearing aid technology continues to advance with the addition of rechargeable hearing aids, Bluetooth pairing to phones/apps, and the latest addition, waterproof hearing aids. Previously, companies have made hearing aids water-resistant, but now waterproof hearing aids are on the market. As of July 2023, two companies currently have this technology available: Phonak and Starkey.

A number of my patients, including myself, have been excited about this. It's summertime and it's hard as a parent trying to remember to take your kid's hearing aids out before jumping in the pool. If you're younger, it's difficult trying to tell your friends not to push you into the pool for fear of the hearing aids getting waterlogged and damaged.

Phonak's waterproof hearing aid, called the Lumity, is waterproof, rechargeable, and is available only as a Receiver-in-the-Canal (RIC). This hearing aid also has direct connectivity to FM systems in school and comes in a wide range of colors. From my perspective, it is the better choice for kids. The only drawback I see to this device is that in order to make the hearing aid waterproof, the company had to make the behind-the-ear shell larger to account for the waterproof feature.

Starkey just released a new hearing aid called the Genesis. It is waterproof, rechargeable, and slightly smaller than the Phonak Lumity hearing aid. Starkey offers it in two ear hearing aid styles: in-the-ear called ITE and in-the-canal called ITC. The Starkey device is designed more for adults. There are limited color options, which are typically appealing to children, and no direct FM connection, which some children need to make use of in an academic setting. FM users would need to wear extra equipment in a school setting.

After examining and testing these hearing aids, my opinion is that this first generation of waterproof hearing aids has room for improvement. It normally takes a year or two for companies to iron out the kinks in new technology. Note that all the current hearing aids are water-resistant, so they already offer some protection from water. After testing both new waterproof aids, neither of them floats, so if the hearing aids were submerged in water and came out of the ear, they may become more easily lost.

Tips For Hearing Aids in Summertime:

1. Use a dehumidifier case if at all possible since in the summertime, moisture tends to build-up.
2. Don't set the hearing aid down directly in the sun or leave in the car; the hearing aid shell could melt.
3. If you do get exposed to water or accidentally get in the water with the hearing aid, don't panic...just set the hearing aid or aids down to allow the microphones to dry out (about 10-15 minutes).

-Dr. Todd Landsberg, AuD