Chat Transcript
"Everything you ever wanted to know about ear molds but were afraid to ask."

Guest Speaker: Brad Ingrao Au.D.
Doctor of Audiology
Thursday, March 19, 2009, 7 P.M. (EDT)

Moderator: Good Evening, My name is Toni Barrient; I will be the Moderator - for this evening’s chat. The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) is proud to present live moderated chats, featuring the nation's leading experts in hearing loss and hearing loss issues. This is your opportunity to ask a question and learn more about hearing loss from leaders from a variety of disciplines associated with hearing loss.

This evening’s session will be a moderated chat. I ask that you please hold all your questions for the first half of this evenings chat. The first half hour of this evenings chat will be for our guest speaker to answer all the questions that have been submitted in advance. Once those questions have been answered I will open the floor for questions and you may ask our guest directly.

Our guest speaker this evening is Brad Ingrao, Audiologist. His expertise is in Ear Molds. Dr. Ingrao has presented and been published in journals and trade magazines internationally on the topics of ear mold technology, computer automation and integration and accessibility for individuals with hearing loss. In his current position of Director of Audiology for the Canadian Sensory Institute, Dr. Ingrao is developing a tele-audiology system to deliver services that comply with established standards of care to remote areas of British Columbia and beyond.

Dr. Ingrao has a nickname of Doc Otoblock so that is what we will call him tonight.

Welcome Doc Otoblock!

Doc_Otoblock: Thanks Toni and thanks to all for having me.

Moderator: We have a lot of questions for you this evening so let’s get started with the first one.
Joan, San Diego, California  Is there any way to get a comfortable ear mold that doesn’t have constant feedback?

Doc_Otoblock - Joan, there are a couple keys to feedback reduction. The most important one is an ACCURATE ear impression. If the impression is accurate and the lab doesn’t over-prepare it, then the mold will fit comfortably and not allow feedback.

Some other issues that make feedback a problem are selecting too thin a tube (I recommend “Super Heavy” or “Double Wall” tubing for most people. Finally, many hearing aids have very “peaky” responses and may need some acoustic filtering or damping in the ear hook. Lamb’s wool works great for this.

The bottom line is that if an ear mold leaks, making it tighter usually isn’t the solution. Making the impression BETTER (i.e. more accurate) is.

Emmett, From Canton, Ohio - As one who is allergic to silicone used in many ear molds, how do you propose to prevent the unnecessary waste caused by severe reaction and discard of my offending ear mold? A three-day patch test on my arm was worthless as it takes much longer for symptoms of rash to appear there. It takes 1 1/2 to 2 weeks for a reaction to begin to show on the ear itself. The idea a "soft" ear mold "conforming to the ear" is any benefit is nuts. That ear mold is as soft as a baseball. In fact, it is the ear that conforms to the ear mold, and that is not going to change until ear molds are the consistency of petroleum jelly. Sorry, silicone is of no benefit at all, and Lucite will do just fine for the vast majority of us, as it has for me since 1951.

Doc_Otoblock - I agree completely Emmett. A well-fitted Lucite mold will control feedback just as well as a well fitting anything else mold. If Lucite is friendly to your skin, find a dispenser or audiologist who can make an accurate impression and a lab that won’t over-process it.

From Joe, New York, NY - Dr Ingrao, thank you for this chat. My ear mold seems to cause feedback and I have to decrease amplification on my hearing aid. This defeats the purpose of the aid. What can I do to solve this problem?

Dr. Otoblock - Joe, you’re very welcome. As I said earlier, there are a couple keys to feedback reduction. The most important one is an ACCURATE ear impression.

In addition, many new hearing aids have sophisticated feedback reduction systems that can reduce the feedback without taking a lot of gain away. The best way for your audiologists to identify exactly where the feedback is occurring is to measure it with a Real Ear or Speech mapping probe microphone system. Then they can use the hearing aid fitting software to reduce just the specific area of feedback without turning down the overall volume.
From Joan, Arlington, TX - Because my hearing loss is so severe, my audiologist had one of my HA molds made without a vent to alleviate feedback. Because there is no air circulation, I have a lot of problems with itching and peeling in my ear canals. Are there alternatives to having no vent that will still prevent feedback?

Doc_Otoblock - Joan, I have usually been successful with a very small “pressure vent” in even very profound losses if the other typical causes of feedback are taken care of (tubing thickness, damping of peaks in the hearing aid response). Some labs are now using the same laser technologies the hearing aid companies use and may be able to route the vent in more creative ways than in the past. Check with your audiologists to see if this may be an option. If not, I have also been successful with making a small vent and then loosely packing lamb’s wool in the vent.

From Tina, Baltimore, MD - Why is it so difficult to get ear molds to fit? I've worn hearing aids for close to 40 years (since age 11) and don't think I've ever had a new ear mold fit the first time. I end up going in for adjustment after adjustment, only to end up with a mold that is too loose. This is with different audiologists, different ear mold materials, etc. One mold I currently have was comfortable for about 3 months, then started to rub a sore. My audiologist trimmed it down and it was ok for a couple of weeks then started to rub again. I'm now switching back and forth between two molds. When one starts to rub a sore in one place, I switch to another mold. When that one starts to rub in a different place, I switch back. I don't have time to take away from work to make yet another trip to the audiologist...

Doc_Otoblock - Tina, this is an age-old problem for many. It all starts with the audiologist or dispenser making a really accurate impression that matches your anatomy.

From JoAnn, Marion, TX - Why does my ear mold make a popping sound when I eat? I went back to the audiologist and they told me that the mold did fit properly.

Doc_Otoblock - JoAnn, This usually occurs when the movement of your jaw changes the shape of your ear canal enough to break the acoustic seal of the mold briefly. Two options: One, have a new mold made where you start the impression with a closed mouth and then open your jaw after a minute or so. If your jaw tends to move into your ear canal, this will make a “dent” in the impression. If the lab makes the mold true to this (ask them NOT to fill that in), then that space will accommodate your jaw. The second option is to use a foam ear mold/tip which will comply to your ear movement. Ask your hearing healthcare professional about this.

From Claire, Audubon, PA - My audiologist & I have often discussed ear molds for my severe to profound hearing loss. Do you have suggestions of what to look for in the latest technology that might benefit a 40% word comprehension hearing loss?
**Doc_ Otoblock** - Claire the ear canal has a resonance at around 3000 Hz which our brain uses to help understand speech. The presence of an ear mold usually reduces or eliminates this. We call that “insertion loss”. If your hearing healthcare provider performs Real Ear Measurement (REM) they can measure this and then order acoustic modifiers like a horn, or CFA bore #3 or 2 to bring back most or all of that resonance. Long time HLAA-ers will recall that Mark Ross has been talking about horns for years.

**From Kimberly, Brooklyn, NY** - My ear molds keep popping in and out of my ear all day long. I just recently got new digital behind the ear HAs. Sometimes I'm nervous that my aids may fall out. It’s also quite frustrating b/c I obviously can't hear as well when the ear mold is not securely in the proper place. I've worked hard with my audiologist to find a solution - we've tried attaching the extra piece to the aid that is supposed to keep it in the ear, tried using different style mold tips, and I've even had custom molds made. My ear canal is smaller and shorter than most so that may be a contributing factor.

Do you have any suggestions or advice on how to keep my ear mold securely in my ear?

Your ideas are very much appreciated!

Thank you kindly.

**Dr. Otoblock** - Kimberly, it sounds like you need some additional retention points. If they make a custom mold in the “skeleton” or “half skeleton” style so that part of the mold locks into the helix of your ear, they should stay in place. Feel free to have your audiologist email me with questions.

**From Bruce, Berkeley, CA** - How do ear molds affect the quality of sound from hearing aids? Loudness, bass, treble, distortion, sound of my own voice? How can one evaluate ear molds for the best sound quality?

**Doc_ Otoblock** - Bruce, the ideal ear mold, in my opinion, is acoustically transparent. In reality, they do in fact interact with ear canal acoustics and can, if not carefully planned, reduce or alter the frequency response of the hearing aid. The best way to evaluate and solve these issues is for the hearing care provider to perform Real Ear Measurements during the fitting. With this data, they should be able to adjust the hearing aid and ear mold to resolve these complaints.

**From Connie, Portland, OR** - I am a hearing aid user for over twenty years and my hearing loss in the lower ranges. I purchased a new pair of Phonak hearing aids about two years ago. I have had problems with the ear molds ever since. I went back to the audiologist two times for new molds and the new ear molds still did not consistently stay in place and so that I hear whole words. I have also had new ear molds made at a company that deals in hearing technology but he is not an audiologist. He told me that the ear molds were made improperly. They went over
the curve in the ear under which he says the ear molds should fit to keep them from slipping. I am having the same problem with his molds. His were somewhat better but they still move. When the ear molds are in place I can hear both consonants and vowels. When the molds slip, all I hear are vowel sounds. He has made two different molds for me also but the molds still slip. They even slip when I am sitting down. I can tell when I am watching TV because I don't need captions, for a while anyway. They always slip back out of place. I never had this problem with the older style (harder material). Both places from whom I purchased the molds said that the newer material forms a better bond in the ear. That is not my experience. Is the harder material still available for ear molds? I have out-of-town guests arriving the 17th so I may not be able to attend the chat. Thank you for your help.

Doc_Otoblock - Connie, Chester Perzanski, is an adjunct professor at one of the AuD programs in the US and also a product manager for Starkey Canada. He did some research on this a few years ago and found that the material itself had no effect on feedback or slippage. What made the difference for both was the fit. It sounds like you need a better impression and to go back to Lucite, which is still available from all major labs.

From Judy, Oswego, NY - I got my first pair of hearing aids Sept '08, Phonak brand. After the audiologist has replaced them 3 x's plus tried the small insert type, I still occasionally get sore in ear canal. I'm currently wearing hypoallergenic aids, still get ear irritations, sore enough to have to wait week or sore for healing before wearing them, audiologist "possibly I'm allergic to materials he's using when he grinds them down. Any ideas what he or I may try? Still in the adjustment stage since I've had sore ears off & on. I go to hearing loss support group at Arise in Oswego, NY

Doc_Otoblock - Judy, It seems that the root of your problem is a poor initial impression. Ideally, very little, if any grinding should be needed. Ask for a new impression, but ask them to use a lower viscosity material that won't stretch your ear. Then ask the lab not to build up the impression. Most labs are now using 3D modeling and laser scanning, so if there is a fit issue; it's likely on the part of the initial impression.

From Carol, Cambridge, MA - I would like to wear a half mold instead of the one that rims the inside of the ear, but can't place it correctly. Is there some trick to it?

Doc_Otoblock - Carol, Half shell molds should stay in place as well as a shell or skeleton, but can be a bit trickier to orient. I usually hold the mold with the tube pointing up, then rotate it 180 degrees so it is upside down. Then I place the canal in the ear and rotate the mold toward the back of my head (clockwise for the left, counter clockwise for the right). That usually seats it.
**Joan, San Diego** - Is there any way to get a comfortable ear mold that doesn't have constant feedback?

**Doc_ Otoblock** - Hi Joan, Comfort and acoustic seal should not be mutually exclusive. A good quality impression and a lab that doesn’t over-modify the impression should make a mold that fits snugly and accurately. For severe to profound losses, thick or double wall tubing may also help.

That said, for some people, conventional molds may not work well in the long run. A slow molecular foam ear mold may be a better long term solution. Ask your hearing care professional about arranging a trial of these alternatives.

**From Ron, Rome, GA** - Hi Brad, I was looking forward to the web chat but I found that I have to attend a meeting during that time. I have a very bothersome thing that may be related to ear molds. If you have time on the web chat to comment on it that will be fine. Here's the problem: My left ear is practicably useless, but the right ear, with an Oticon 390 hearing aid is pretty good most of the time. But sometimes the sound just stops. I can press in on the ear mold or jiggle it and I can make the sound come back. I have cleaned the tubes and even replaced them. It may be due to earwax when the ear mold comes in contact with it, blocking the opening in the tube. It may be due to unequal air pressure, because sometimes I feel a popping sensation. I explained all this to an ENT doc and he prescribed a decongestant, but I don't think it does any good. When I press in on the ear mold, I feel like I am applying pressure to the eardrum, restoring it to where it ought to be. Maybe I need surgery to change the position the staples. I have also noticed that when I come down from a high altitude I have no sound in either ear for about two hours.

**Doc_ Otoblock** - Ron, It’s not possible for me to comment about the possible need for surgery on the web, but based on your experiments, I would postulate that perhaps the angle of the ear mold may be off so that the sound bore isn’t pointing straight down the ear canal. When you press on it, you may be re-aligning it just enough to improve the sound. The altitude issue sounds like Eustachian Tube issues and I believe your ENT is the best person to address that.

**From Victor, Washington** - I suffered itchy ears for many years. No physician or audiologist responded to or commented on the issues. It took a Grad Student to tell me I was the proud owner of a fungus colony in my ears--one that was easily eradicated. I've since spoken with many others who suffer from itchiness and knowing what I know suggest they ask their physician. This isn't new, Dx and treatment is approved, so what is the level of care that brushes this problem aside?

**Doc_ Otoblock** - Victor, I can’t comment on the care you received elsewhere but the fact that the Grad student found it is a good indication that the trend toward better training is working. A very good way to maintain the health of your ears now that you’ve treated them is to use the
Dry and Store which both dehumidifies your hearing aids, but also has a UV germicidal cycle that kills most bacteria and fungi.

**From Helen, Fairfax, VA - What** is the best method to take impressions for ear molds and what is the least sensitive but well fitting to the ear canal?

**Doc_Otoblock** - Helen, I don’t believe there is a one “best” method for impressions that will be successful for every patient. When I train audiologists, I teach them to be keen observers of the dynamic anatomy of the patient. How the ear, jaw and face muscles interact. By working with the ear rather than trying to adapt the ear to a particular method, we get custom processes that tend to, in my experience, work out better in the long run.

I’m not exactly sure what the second part of your question means, but if you mean that your ears are sensitive to materials (i.e. they become irritated), then I would first eliminate all tints and colors from the molds. If that doesn’t work, try either clear surgical grade silicone or clear Lucite materials. Pacific Coast Labs also has a vinyl material called Poly Sheer that has been shown to be essentially inert and in my experience rarely causes any issues.

**From George, South Carolina** Is there any difference in effectiveness between full ear molds and half shell ear molds?

**Doc_Otoblock** - George, not really in terms of sound transmission or feedback control. The acoustic seal occurs in the first bend of the ear canal, so how much material is in the concha or bowl of the ear is really not relevant. From the standpoint of retention (keeping it in your ear), many people find that the shell or skeleton molds are a bit better. For insertion, many actually find the half shell easier to insert, and I would often use them with patient with arthritis or shoulder mobility issues.

**From Nan, Maryland** - I have a non-allergenic ear mold (I believe it is silicone) that drives me a bit crazy from the itching it causes in my ear. There is no real air vent because I have a severe/profound loss in that ear. I dry it nightly in my dry 'n store and try to let my ear dry and use a Mack ear drier after I shower. I have been told I have no fungus or anything in my ear and it looks like the skin is a bit dry. Using anything in my ear makes my ear canal sweat more, and then itch more. What can I do to make the itch stop? Hydrocortisone cream works a bit but then I sweat and itch more.

Thanks a lot.

**Doc_Otoblock** - Nan, you’re doing everything I can think of except possibly consulting a dermatologist to culture both your ear canal and the ear mold to see if there is anything there. The Dry and Store is a great option, but make sure the UV cycle is working properly. If not, then it will dry, but not disinfect the mold and whatever is causing the itch will keep getting back. Finally, you say you dry them nightly, but do you ever wash the molds? Warm water and mild soap then a through rinse before the Dry and Store may just do the trick.
From Lorraine, South Windsor, CT - Is there a substance for HA ear molds that are allergy free substance. Mine are always irritating my ear canal causing sores. HA dealer says mine are, but one dealer made had them made with no irritations. He has retired, so changed audiologists. Please advise. Thank you

Dr. Otoblock Lorraine, Sores in your ears sounds more like a poor fit than an allergy. Allergies to ear mold or hearing aid shell materials tend to present as generalized redness, not sores. If the shell has any tint in it, that may be part of the issue, but if you have sores on your ear, I’d ask for a re-case from a new impression.

From Marcia - Is there any sensitivity to the ear mold soft plastic type material that ear molds are made out of these days? I have an itching problem with them and have been told this is not possible. I was told the material is used for a better fit and to help prevent feedback. What is your advice about this?

Doc_ Otoblock - Marcia, Often itchy ears are not caused by an allergy to the material itself, but to either the tints (color) in them or bacteria getting trapped on the ear mold. Many people find that daily disinfection with ultraviolet light, such as is available in the Dry and Store, kills the bacteria that cause the itch. Also, there really isn’t research data to bear out that softer materials prevent feedback. Better fitting ear molds and properly configured hearing aids do that.

From Harold, Stamford, CT - I have an extremely severe / profound hearing loss in both ears. My hearing aids (Oticon 380P) do not have feedback control. What ear molds (type and material - I currently use canal type with hypo allergic material along with size 13 double thick wall tubing) are the best for preventing feedback. I have normal size ear canals. Any advice would be greatly appreciated! Thank You!

Doc_ Otoblock - Harold, that’s a great power linear aid. You’re right on the money with everything you’re doing. Be sure your ears are clear of wax and that the molds are fitting well. Finally a little lamb’s wool loosely placed in the ear mold tubing or ear hook will smooth out the peaks in the hearing aid response and may be just the ticket to reduce or eliminate the feedback.

From Jonel, MI - I have seen some hearing aid users with a wire in their ear (no ear mold). Is this the trend now, or are there limitations to having a wire instead of an ear mold?

Doc_ Otoblock - Jonel, These are indeed a newer design. These hearing aids have the receiver (speaker) inside the ear canal and are held in with an open silicone dome. They are great for
mild to moderate losses. Some may be fitted with power receivers and a custom mold for more severe losses.

**From Mark, Los Angeles** - Why is that sometimes my ear mold is loose as if my ear had changed shape? Thanks Mark

**Doc_Otoblock** - Mark, it’s because your ear is a dynamic thing. Many people find that their ear canal shape and size fluctuate with weather, diet, etc. For these folks, traditional ear molds or in the ear hearing aids may not be a good fit. Compliant foam ear molds like the “Comply” family of products may be a better option. Check with your hearing care professional about these.

**From Danielle, NY** - Hi Dr. Brad Ingrao, First thanks for coming here. I wanted to ask you a question regarding the hearing aids I had. I had Siemens BTE hearing aids.. I only wear my L aid. Now every time I put the aid in after cleaning it or without cleaning it. Mine was itchy for months and hours like daily. To the point where I didn’t want to wear my aid. When the aid is in I shake my ear where the ear mold is. I had to also use q-tips constantly. I couldn’t take it. I found a new audiologist because my Dr. retired. I am now in a process of getting new aid right now I have a loner Oticon and it’s a HARD MOLD. My first aid was a SOFT. So I told the previous Dr. and she changed it for me, she thought maybe it was the type of mold. The hard mold is STILL CONSTANT ITCHING. Still the same. I don’t know what it could be. I went to my ENT. 4X He said no wax nothing wrong with my ear. No tearing. Not a thing wrong. My ear looks FINE. Are there any other options for me? Thank you in advance for your time.

To clean my aid I use wipes which my audiologist gave me.

**Doc_Otoblock - Danielle**, several other chatters have had the same question earlier. Often itchy ears are not caused by an allergy to the material itself, but to either the tints (color) in them or bacteria getting trapped on the ear mold. Many people find that daily disinfection with ultraviolet light, such as is available in the Dry and Store, kills the bacteria that cause the itch. Also, Danielle, please don’t use Q-tips IN your ears. They actually stimulate more wax production which can make the itch worse.

**From Warren, Omaha** - WHAT MATERIAL LAST LONGER AND DOES NOT ITCHES DURING THE HEAT WAVES???

**Doc_Otoblock - Warren**, Lucite is the material that in my experience “lasts” the longest. We seem to be on an itchy ear run today. Often itchy ears are not caused by an allergy to the material itself, but to either the tints (color) in them or bacteria getting trapped on the ear mold. Many people find that daily disinfection with ultraviolet light, such as is available in the Dry and Store, kills the bacteria that cause the itch.
From Evan, N.J. - Are there occasions when an ear mold could fall out of the ear? My father wears Destiny ITE hearing aids and has had ear molds made twice. The molds still sometimes fall out. Thank you.

Doc_ Otoblock - Evan, yes they can and do fall out when the hearing aid or ear mold is not properly or fully inserted. Ask the hearing care professional who fit your father to review the proper insertion procedure and to verify that they are fitting properly.

From David, FL - How often should new molds be taken? The current ones do not fit as tight anymore. Also, ear molds seem to get the inside of ear itching after wearing it all day; Could that be due to Florida’s environment or from old ear mold?

Doc_ Otoblock - Ah... another itchy ear question. Before I answer it, I need to say I have no affiliation to Dry and Store, they just make a great product for this problem.

David, ear molds should be replaced when they are so loose that they constantly feedback or become uncomfortable. We’ve addressed the itchy ears several times in this chat, but again, itchy ears are not caused by an allergy to the material itself, but to either the tints (color) in them or bacteria getting trapped on the ear mold. Many people find that daily disinfection with ultraviolet light, such as is available in the Dry and Store, kills the bacteria that cause the itch. I don’t think anything is getting in the gap, just getting in your ears when you’re not wearing them and then getting trapped on the surface of the mold.

Sister Mary, New York - Is there any way for a hearing aid user to know when an aid is 'squealing'? I cannot hear the squeal at all, and it can be annoying to others.

Doc_ Otoblock - Sister Mary, this is a very common problem that I’ve not seen a good solution for aside from a guide animal. Many newer hearing aids have very good feedback management systems. These electronic features “listen” for feedback and then either reduce the output at that specific pitch or cancel it out with a phase-reversed sound.

From Nancy, IL - No matter what kind of ear mold I have worn, my ears always itch. Sometimes to the point that they bleed. I have been told there is nothing that can be done to correct that. I have tried many different molds. Is there a new technology that I can try?

Doc_ Otoblock - Nancy, aside from the other itchy ears advice I’ve given, it sounds like you may benefit from a foam ear mold system like the Comply. Ask your hearing care professional about these.

From Stephanie, California - I currently use a patriot ear mold. Usually, I’ve been able to use them for 4 years with no problem, but I purchased new ones last Fall and they don't seem to fit correctly. I'm experiencing a lot of feedback from them. My question is do ear infections cause
the ear canal to become bigger because of swelling, thus causing the ear molds to fit looser once the ear infection is gone?

**Doc_ Otoblock - Stephanie**, unless you had a very severe external ear infection that left significant scarring, I doubt it. More likely is that you just had a bit more than average ear growth this year. By the way, our ears and noses continue to grow throughout our lives.

**From Ruth, New York - I** bought two Epoq Oticon hearing aids in January. I have been unable to wear them because I had a severe allergic reaction to the ear molds. Why don't hearing aids companies make hypo allergenic ear molds for ALL hearing aids? Making hypo allergenic molds would probably not be expensive, and, when you are spending $3500 per aid, is probably not a cost factor. For those of us to whom this is very important, it would save a lot of pain and discomfort. For everyone else, they would not know the difference.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my question.

**Doc_ Otoblock - Ruth**, I hear you, but I really don't have any insight into how the hearing aid companies think. I do know that they listen to customers and groups like HLAA. I'd suggest a letter writing or email campaign.

**From Burton, OH - I** am profoundly deaf but still use hearing aids. I need a tight fitting ear mold. The soft pliable type irritates my ear and the pain can be excruciating. Different audiologist, different material: NO HELP. Do you have suggestions? Also how to get the tubing and mold off the aid to clean? How often to change tubing? Thanks.

**Doc_ Otoblock - Burton**, let me take these one at a time. Hard materials are still available and if they work better for you, insist on them. You are the boss, not the audiologist. Second, there is a tubing system called Continuous Flow Adapter (CFA) that is available from almost every lab. These tubes easily snap out and in for cleaning. If you clean them once a week and replace them every few months when they get hard, you should be in good shape.

**From Carol Cambridge, MA - Until** my most recent hearing aids I never realized an ear mold could be so comfortable I have to touch it to be sure it's there. I'm sorry I didn't return the other during the trial period until it was just as comfortable. Is it reasonable to expect it to be so comfortable that it can't be felt and have it redone until it is?

**Doc_ Otoblock - Carol**, congratulations on finding a great fit! Yes that's the ideal. You're fortunate. That's actually the ideal mold. Consider yourself fortunate and tell all your friends about this place.

Moderation stops.

**Moderator -** You may ask your questions now.
Joegordon - My audiologist can make the mold in his office. The material he uses for the impression actually becomes the mold. Does not send it out to be made. Takes about one hour to measure, make, dry out, and fit. Have you heard of this way? Do you have a comment on this procedure? Thank you!

Doc_Otoblock - Joe... if it works for you and you're hearing I have no problem with these "instant molds. In fact, they may often fit better since there is no lab processing

shera_k - why doesn't everyone do it that way?

Doc_Otoblock - Shera, no way for me to answer that. As you all know each professional has different areas of interest and skill. We're not all ear mold geeks :)

shera_k - no crystal ball, huh? :-)

marcia - I am interested in knowing the kind of molds Carolagate has since mine hurt my ears

Doc_Otoblock - Marcia, I believe carol's success is not the type of mild, but the technique of the fitter

Carolagate - I'll see if I can make my question more clear. Is it reasonable to keep returning molds until the succeed in making one that you cannot feel - or is that an unreasonable standard?

Sobehecht - My new audiologist packs my ear until it hurts for the mold. The previous one used something like a syringe. The syringe type seems to feel better. Is that common?

Doc_Otoblock - carolagate, that is the ideal, but I would not keep going back if your are hearing well and are not experiencing discomfort

Doc_Otoblock - sobehecht - pain is never good. Communicate this to the audiologist. That much stretching will usually result in a mold that is too tight.

shera_k - Is it possible that carol has a comfortable fit because her loss is less severe? She may not need a tight fit therefore the odds are better that she has a comfortable fit

Doc_Otoblock - ear molds and impressions are like a good pair of shoes.... snug but not tight

marcia - can one be allergic to the material used in soft molds?

Doc_Otoblock - shera_k, in my experience no one needs a "tight" fit. Everyone needs an accurate snug fit
Carolagate - I guess now that I know it's possible to make a mold that can't be felt; my standard of comfort is a mold that can't be felt. (My loss is moderate.)

Doc_Otoblock - marcia... one can be allergic to anything. The only way to know for sure is to have skin testing done at a dermatologist

shera_k - that makes sense, esp. with feedback control in the ha now

KathyN - I don't think having an uncomfortable ear mold is acceptable. After many, many tries with my regular audi, I finally switched audis and got good and comfortable fit.

Marcia - what material is new and is showing good results for ear molds?

shera_k - At what point in hearing loss is it advisable to switch to double wall tubing

Doc_Otoblock - KathyN, that's exactly right. One maybe two tries is Ok. After that, get another person involved

Sobehecht - Did you say to put some lamb’s wool at the extension of the mold for better fit? can you be more precise? Alice

Doc_Otoblock - marcia... I have success with all kinds of materials old and new. It's about fit, not material. I successfully for profound losses with Lucite and mild losses with vinyl

Doc_Otoblock - shera_k - I usually use double wall at severe and worse losses

KathyN -Sorry, I joined late - did you discuss the Rite molds? I ask because I did try them and because of the size and structure of the ear canal couldn’t wear them.

shera_k - Thanks Brad

Doc_Otoblock -sobehect... lamb's wool is for feedback reduction by reduction of acoustic peaks, not fit. It goes Inside the tubing

Doc_Otoblock -KathyN... we did a bit. They can be made with custom molds.

Doc_Otoblock - you're welcome shera_k

KathyN - The comply foam molds you mentioned - would they present the same issue for some who can't wear Rite?

Doc_Otoblock - Kathyn - they might be an option. I just heard from the company that makes them that they now have a line of tips for Rite aids.

Doc_Otoblock -I think we're out of time folks
Doc_Otoblock - thank you for all the great questions.

Moderator - yes our time is up. We will close this session. I am sorry if we did not get to everyone’s questions this evening. There certainly were a lot of great questions. Thank you Dr. Otoblock for being with us tonight and providing us with your expertise.

shera_k - thanks doc-otoblock! :-)

sobehecht - Thank you so much!

Doc_Otoblock - always a pleasure HLAA. Seems like I have just been recruited to write an article for Hearing Loss, so I’ll get working on that

Doc_Otoblock - have a great evening everyone and take care of your ears

Marcia - thanks .. I am on the west coast and miscalculated the time...sorry I missed so much

BigBear - Doc will you be in Nashville?

shera_k great - news! I look forward to reading it!

Doc_Otoblock - Sorry BigBear can't make it this year.

Moderator - Chat transcripts will be available usually within 24 hours online at www.hearingloss.org

Upcoming Chats:

• April 23, 2009, Jane R. Madell, PhD, CCC A/SLP, Cert Avt - Moving from Hearing Aids to Cochlear Implants - How to decide

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Good night and thank you all for joining us tonight.
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