



Hearing aids help

Australian Hearing

Helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to hear better



Hearing Loss—What can be done?

Some types of hearing loss may be helped by medical treatment. Your health worker, doctor or audiologist can help with early assessment and treatment.

If the hearing loss cannot be improved and is likely to last for a long time, a hearing aid may help.

What is a hearing aid?

Hearing aids are tiny amplifying devices that make sounds louder. They help a person with hearing loss make the best use of their hearing.

All hearing aids have the same three basic parts:

Microphone—picks up the sound

Amplifier—makes the sound louder

Earphone—sends the sound to the ear

Most hearing aids have a battery, on/off switch, telecoil and a volume control.



Air conduction hearing aids

There are a number of different styles of hearing aids, including *behind the ear* (BTE), *in the ear* (ITE), *in the canal* (ITC) and body worn aids.

To use these hearing aids it is necessary for an ear mould to be made. This involves taking an impression (shape) of the ear. The impression material (a plasticine-like material) is placed in a syringe and squeezed into the ear.

This impression material becomes firm very quickly and the impression of the ear is then removed and sent away to be made into an in the ear hearing aid or a mould to be attached to a behind the ear hearing aid.

In-the-ear hearing aid



Behind-the-ear hearing aid



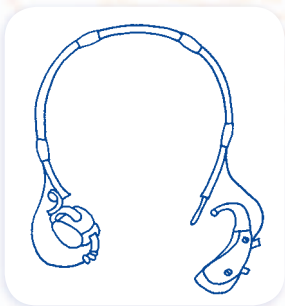
Bone conduction hearing aids

There are two types of bone conduction hearing aids, a head level aid and a body level aid.

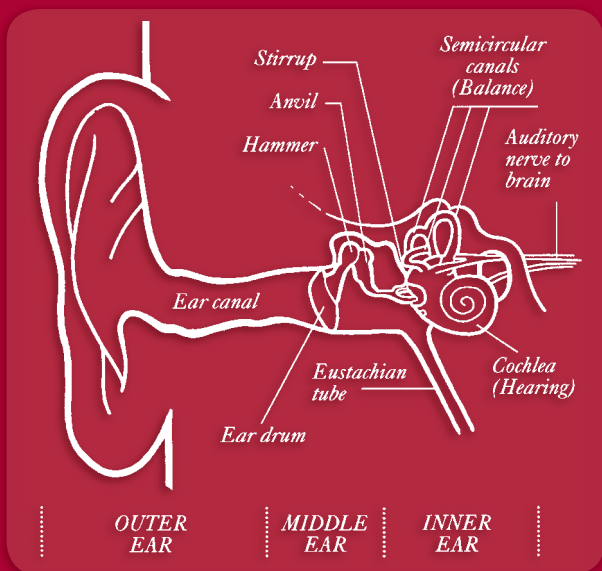
A bone conductor hearing aid is designed to amplify sound waves and send the amplified signal to a bone conductor vibrator worn on the bone behind the ear (the mastoid). Vibrations of the bone conductor cause the signal to go directly to the inner ear by vibrating the bones of the skull.

A bone conductor hearing aid is used when an ear mould cannot be worn or an air conduction hearing aid is not suitable. It allows the whole middle ear system to be bypassed and for sound to be taken directly to the inner ear.

Bone conductor hearing aids

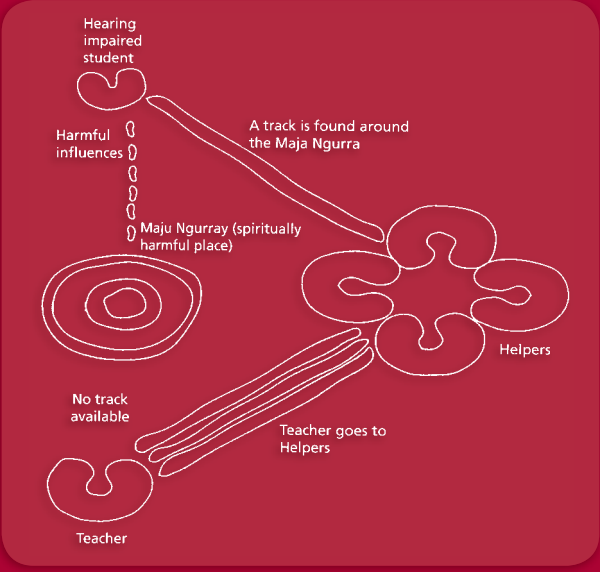


The ear



How does your ear work?

Sound waves enter your ear canal and hit your ear drum, this makes it vibrate. Three tiny bones in your middle ear link the vibrating ear drum with the inner part of your ear. The last of these bones is connected to a bony structure that looks a bit like a snail shell. It is called the cochlea (pronounced cock-lee-ah). Your cochlea is filled with a liquid that carries the vibrations to thousands of tiny hair cells. Each cell is tuned to a particular sound (or frequency). As these little hair cells move in the fluid, they carry a message to the nerve which is connected to your brain, which turns this signal into what you hear. And all this happens in a fraction of a second!



Acknowledgement: The cover painting was originally created especially for the 1990 Tactile Aids, Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants Conference by Cecily, an Aboriginal artist from Yuendumu in the Northern Territory.

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