



Purchasing a hearing aid

IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO CONSIDER

Hearing aid technology is advancing at a rapid rate. Most hearing aid companies will release a new top-of-the-range product every 12-18 months.



Modern hearing aids have clearer sound, better performance in background noise and more 'automatic' features which make them easier to use than previous generation hearing aids. There may be a number of different hearing aids that are suitable for you.

It is still important to remember that hearing aids are essentially a device to amplify sound. Your level of hearing also determines how clear the amplified sound is and the amount of benefit you can get from certain hearing aid features. The other thing to remember is that different hearing aid manufacturers may give different names to similar hearing aid features. This can be confusing. Your audiologist will be able to discuss this with you.

It is most important to choose a hearing aid that matches your individual needs as closely as possible.

The most expensive hearing aid is not necessarily the best hearing aid for your needs. When your existing hearing aid can no longer be repaired and you are no longer eligible for a new one from Australian Hearing, be wise when shopping around for another one.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING A NEW HEARING AID

1. Become an expert in your own hearing loss. Your Australian Hearing Audiologist can discuss the following with you:

- * What is the cause of your hearing loss? This may affect whether your hearing will change over the years.

- * Has your hearing stayed stable over the years, or does it fluctuate (change)?

- * How clearly do you hear speech? Are there some sounds you will never be able to hear?

- * If you understand about your hearing loss, you will be able to advise other people on how they can assist you and understand what technology will be appropriate for you.

2. Choose a hearing service provider who suits your needs.

- * Make sure you are aware of the provider's qualifications. We recommend that you deal with an Audiologist who is a member of the *Audiological Society of Australia*.

- * Choose someone who you feel comfortable talking to. If you have a permanent hearing loss you will need to see your audiologist many times over your lifetime. When it comes to choosing new hearing aids, your audiologist will be better able to help you if they understand what your lifestyle is like, and what you want from a hearing aid.

- * Shop around to compare prices. Ask for technical terms to be explained in plain language and enquire about a money back trial period.

3. Consider what your hearing needs are. This will influence your choice of what hearing aid features you need.

4. Consider repair and reliability issues.

- * How long do repairs usually take? Is there any opportunity to have a loan aid while it is away for repair?

- * Is there a warranty period? Repairs can be very expensive. Find out the types of repairs that can be done for free during this warranty period.

- * Is there a difference in battery life? If batteries have to be replaced often, this can become costly.

COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

New technology has also improved cochlear implants (the bionic ear). Both hardware and software improvements have resulted in a smaller, better performing device. The implant program can benefit more deaf and hearing impaired people than ever before.

If you are interested, ask your Audiologist for more information or contact a Cochlear Implant team (a list of clinics is available).

INSURANCE

Hearing aids can be quite costly and so it is worth considering insuring them against loss, through either home and contents or personal property insurance.

We recommend that you investigate this option before turning 21.

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

Some health funds offer limited cover for hearing aids. Cover is usually only available with the highest level of private health insurance.