

Guide to Getting Hearing Aids

Hearing Aid Funding Scheme

If you have a hearing loss, hearing aids may be part of the solution to improve your hearing. The Ministry of Health may be able to pay for your hearing aids.

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Will the Ministry of Health help me pay for hearing aids?

The Ministry of Health has two types of funding available for hearing aids: the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme and the Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme. Depending on your circumstances and type of hearing loss, you may be able to get help from one of these schemes.

This booklet tells you about the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme. You can find out about the Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme in another Ministry of Health booklet. If you want to find out who is able to get each type of funding ask an audiology service or go to the Ministry of Health website www.health.govt.nz and search for 'Eligibility Criteria for Hearing Aids'. Both booklets are also on Enable New Zealand's website:

www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/hearing

Who can use the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme?

The Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Funding Scheme covers the cost of hearing aids for eligible children and adults who are New Zealand residents who ordinarily live in New Zealand.

Adults are eligible if they:

- have had a significant hearing loss from childhood
- have a hearing loss and a significant visual impairment (for example, deafblind) or a hearing loss and an intellectual disability or a physical disability that limits their ability to communicate safely and effectively
- have a Community Services Card and are:
 - in paid employment for 30 hours per week or more
 - a registered job seeker looking for paid employment
 - doing voluntary work (more than 20 hours per week)
 - studying full time
 - caring full time for a dependent person.

This funding covers only the price of the hearing aid and does not cover any assessment or fitting fees that an audiology service may charge.

Funding for a hearing aid for each ear is available for adults no more than once every six years. For children, it is available no more than three times in six years.

You may be able to get help to buy hearing aids from the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) or Veterans' Affairs New Zealand. If you can get help from either of these organisations, you cannot get support from the Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Funding Scheme as well.

Only audiologists who are full members of the New Zealand Audiological Society (MNZAS) or audiometrists who are an audiometrist member of the NZAS can access the Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Funding Scheme for their clients. Check that your audiologist/audiometrist is an approved assessor. If they are not you will not be able to get funding support from the Ministry of Health.

Other hearing services

Other services can help you manage your hearing loss. You will find more information in the following booklets, which are available on the Ministry of Health's website (go to: www.health.govt.nz/hearing).

- *Are you deaf or do you find it difficult to hear?* is a booklet for adults over 16 years.
- *Does your child have difficulty hearing?* is a booklet about hearing aids for children and young people aged 0–16 years.

What can I expect from audiology services?

An approved assessor will assess your hearing to work out what is the best solution for improving it. If hearing aids are part of this solution, the approved assessor will guide you through the process of getting them. The flowchart below shows what you can expect.

1. Assessments

An approved assessor will assess your hearing and your hearing needs.

2. Recommendation

As a result of these assessments, your approved assessor may recommend hearing aids as part of the solution for improving your hearing.

3. Selection of hearing aids

Your approved assessor will advise you on the types of hearing aids that would best meet your hearing needs and give you a written quote that lists the services you may expect to pay for.

4. Application for funding

If you are eligible for hearing aids through the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme, your approved assessor will make an application to the Ministry of Health on your behalf.

If hearing aids are not recommended or you decide not to have them, you could see a hearing therapist for free advice on how to manage your hearing loss.

Phone 0800 008 011
or visit: www.life.nzl.org/page/life_11.php

You may have to pay your audiology service for other services.

5. Fitting

After your approved assessor gets approval for you to try hearing aids, they will fit and programme them for you and show you how to use and take care of them.



6. Trial

Your approved assessor will give you time to try the hearing aids to see if they work for you. Let your approved assessor know if you have any problems as they can adjust the hearing aids. You will probably need more than one appointment to get the hearing aids going just right for you.



The standard trial period is six to eight weeks.

Always take care of hearing aids. You may need to return them if they are not suitable for you during the trial period.

If the hearing aids still do not work for you, you can return them during the standard trial period and try a different model.

7. Final decision



After trying hearing aids, you will need to decide, with your approved assessor, if the hearing aids are meeting your needs. If they are, your approved assessor will arrange for the Ministry of Health to pay for them.

Frequently asked questions

1. If I need hearing aids, what kind of audiology service will I receive?

Many clinics offer extended follow-up appointments as part of their package for fitting hearing aids. Your approved assessor will let you know how many appointments you may need and the cost, if any, for extra appointments. They will advise you on all costs and give you a written quote that explains all fees and services involved.

2. How long is the hearing aid trial for?

Most clinics offer a trial of six to eight weeks; a trial of two to three weeks is also common. You need a trial period because your brain needs time to adjust to new sounds. During the trial, your approved assessor will adjust the aids until you are happy with them. If you are not happy with the hearing aids after the trial period, you can return them. You may then choose to try a different type of hearing aid or, if you decide not to go ahead with hearing aids after all, you will get a refund on some or all of any service costs.

3. How many hearing aids will I need?

Most people with hearing loss have reduced hearing in both ears. After your approved assessor has done their assessment, you can discuss whether one or two hearing aids would be better for you. If your hearing loss affects both ears, you may get better results with two hearing aids.

4. What costs might I have to pay?

If you are able to get help from the Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Funding Scheme you will not need to pay for your hearing aids. However, there are other costs you may need to pay.

- Private audiology practices charge for assessments, fitting services, hearing aid batteries and follow-up.
- NZAS assessors working in district health boards don't charge for assessments but in some cases may charge a separate fitting fee for adults.
- You will need to pay for hearing aid batteries.

Ask your approved assessor to provide you with a written quote listing the services they provide and their repairs process. See an example of a quote on page 10.

Audiologist/audiometrist in private practice

Costs: + Audiology assessment service

+ Hearing aid fitting fees

+ Hearing aid batteries

= Total you pay

Audiologist/audiometrist based in public hospital

Costs: + In some cases, a separate fitting fee

+ Hearing aid batteries

= Total you pay

Types of hearing aid

Hearing aids come in a range of styles to suit different hearing needs and your personal situation. Your approved assessor will explain the benefits and things to consider when choosing a hearing aid.

1. Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids:

- sit behind the ear with a sound tube going into the ear
- are available in a range of sizes, styles and colours
- suit most levels of hearing loss
- are usually larger and easier to physically manage than in-the-ear models.

2. In-the-ear (ITE) hearing aids:

- fit completely in the ear
- are available in a range of sizes and styles

- smaller models may not be suitable for people with significant hearing loss
- may be prone to damage from moisture or ear wax
- are generally smaller and more fragile and can be more difficult to physically manage than behind-the-ear models.

Other features (accessories)

Some hearing aids have extra features to help you use your telephone, mobile phone and TV and can connect to other listening devices in halls, churches and theatres. Hearing aids may also have optional remote control units so that you can more easily adjust them yourself. Your approved assessor will tell you which extra features, if any, might help you with your hearing problem.

You may need to pay the balance if you choose hearing aids with accessories over and above what is recommended as essential for your hearing needs.

Meeting my needs

Your approved assessor is required to recommend the most appropriate and cost-effective hearing aids to meet your needs and will discuss the options available to you.

Overleaf is a general guide to some typical listening environments and the type of hearing aid that is most suited to each of these environments. Some features are common to two or more types of hearing aid. However, a basic hearing aid may be less adjustable than one that is used in more challenging listening environments, or the quality of sound may be different.

An overview of the differences between types of hearing aids

Type of hearing aid	Hearing aid features – benefits and limitations
Basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• suits people who usually talk to one or two people at a time (for example, at home or in a quiet setting)• suits people who have a quiet lifestyle• may not be suitable for all types of hearing loss• may not be as helpful as higher-range models in demanding or complex listening situations
Mid-range	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• suits people who are active and encounter difficult listening conditions more often (for example, in small groups or where there is a low level of background noise, such as in a church)• may not provide benefits in all listening environments
High-range	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• suits people who have specific or complex hearing needs or who need to hear very well in challenging listening situations (for example, interacting with large groups where there is regular or disruptive background noise)• is a more expensive option• could provide more features than are needed.

Warranty and repairs

It is normal for hearing aids to need servicing from time to time. They are sensitive electronic devices that require regular care and maintenance.

Manufacturers offer at least a 12-month warranty against any faulty parts. The warranty does not cover damage caused by moisture, wax or mistreatment, so it is important that you look after the hearing aid and keep it clean. Your approved assessor will explain how to do this

and can arrange for any repairs to be done for you. You will not need to pay for the repairs if you are able to get hearing aids through the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme.

For children's hearing aids, your approved assessor arranges for repairs through a Deaf Education Centre.

Insurance

It is your responsibility to look after your hearing aids that the Ministry of Health has paid for. If something happens to them, you cannot get help to replace your hearing aids for six years after you have been approved for the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme (for adults). It is a good idea to insure them. Most home contents insurance will cover hearing aids, but you may need to advise your insurer that you have them and update your policy.

Batteries

The life of the batteries in your hearing aids varies according to the model of hearing aid you get and how you use them. You will need to buy hearing aid batteries yourself. Some hearing aid batteries are rechargeable.

The cost of batteries can vary, so it's a good idea to check the size and cost of batteries before you decide on a specific model of hearing aid. Cheap batteries may not work as well as more expensive types and there is a risk that they will leak inside the hearing aid. Your approved assessor can tell you the price of the batteries for the model you are thinking about getting.

Sample quote form

Your approved assessor will give you a quote of the costs and services you may expect from them. The quote should include the information covered in the sample form below.

Name:		Organisation:			
Date:		Clinic:			
Audiologist/Audiometrist:					
Hearing needs:					
Amplification:	Standard	High power	Non-standard		
Specific needs:					
Recommended product/s to trial:					
	Brand	Model	Price	No.	Total (incl. GST)
Hearing aid/s:				1 / 2	
Accessories:					
Ear mould/domes:					
Fitting fee:					
Services included in fitting fee:					
Total cost to client:					
Ongoing costs:					
Batteries:					
Battery size:		Price/Pack:			

For more information about hearing aid funding, contact the Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Services Manager:

Enable New Zealand

Freephone: 0800 362 253

Phone: (06) 353 5800

Email: hearing@enable.co.nz

Website: www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/hearing

