

Guide to Getting Hearing Aids

Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme

If you have a hearing loss, hearing aids may be part of the solution to improve your hearing. You may be able to get some help from the Ministry of Health towards the cost of buying 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 Subsidy Scheme. You can find out about the Hearing Aid Funding 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 can also be found on Enable New Zealand's website: www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/hearing

The Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme

The Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme provides \$511.11 (including GST) per hearing aid to adults (over the age of 16) who have a permanent hearing loss and need a hearing aid, are New Zealand residents who ordinarily live in New Zealand and are not covered under the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme.

You may be able to get help towards the cost of 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 also get support from the Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme.

The subsidy for each hearing aid is available no more than once every six years.

The Hearing Aid Subsidy Scheme does not cover any additional costs for hearing assessments or hearing aid fitting services that audiology services may charge.

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 Subsidy 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 booklet: *Are you deaf or do you find it difficult to hear?* (for adults over 16 years). You can download it by going to: www.health.govt.nz/hearing



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.

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

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 budget. They will also give you a written quote that lists the services you may expect to pay for.

Always take care of hearing aids both when you are trying them out and when you have made the decision to buy them.



4. Fitting

Your approved assessor will fit and programme the hearing aids for you and show you how to use and take care of them.



5. 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.

You may need to pay for the hearing aids when you take them away for trial. But you can get most of this money back if you decide not to get any hearing aids after all.

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



6. Final decision

After trying hearing aids, you will need to decide, with your approved assessor, if the hearing aids are meeting your needs. If you want to go ahead with them, your approved assessor will apply for the Ministry of Health's Hearing Aid Subsidy to help pay for them.

Frequently asked questions

1. How much will I need to pay for my hearing aids?

There is a wide range of prices and brands of hearing aids – from basic and mid-range through to advanced models. Each model has different features and benefits (see ‘Types of hearing aid’, page 6). Your approved assessor will recommend the most appropriate hearing aid to suit your hearing needs and budget.

The price of a hearing aid can range from less than \$1,200 (including GST) to more than \$3,000 for more advanced models. These prices are for the actual hearing aid and do not include any service fees that you may be charged.

2. 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 and providing hearing aids. Your approved assessor will let you know how many appointments you may need and the cost, if any, for extra appointments.

The satisfaction that you can get from hearing aids depends not only on the hearing aids you select but also on the service you get from an audiology service. Your approved assessor will advise you on all costs and will give you a written quote that explains all the services and fees involved. Some district health board clinics charge a fee, but the overall fees will be much lower than those charged in private clinics.

3. 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 will need time to adjust to new sounds. If you are not satisfied with the hearing aids during the trial period, tell your approved assessor so that they can adjust the hearing aids further or arrange for you to try different hearing aids. You will get a refund on some or all of the costs you have paid if you decide not to go ahead with the hearing aids after all.

4. 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 will normally get better results with two hearing aids.

5. Will all prices be the same from one clinic to another?

Prices for hearing aids and audiology services may vary. You may want to compare prices, but be sure to check that you are comparing exactly the same model of hearing aid and/or the same services. There may also be costs for a second opinion or to get a quote from a different assessor. A new approved assessor may want to carry out a hearing assessment to be sure they are giving you the best information about your hearing needs. If you choose to change your audiology clinic, you can ask for your records to be forwarded to the new clinic.

6. What costs might I have to pay?

Private audiology practices charge for their services. You will need to pay for the hearing aids (less the hearing aid subsidy), assessment and fitting services, hearing aid batteries and repairs.

NZAS assessors working in district health board clinics don't charge for assessments. You will need to pay for hearing aids (less the Hearing Aid Subsidy), hearing aid batteries, repairs and, in some cases, a separate fitting fee.

Ask your approved assessor to provide you with a written quote listing the services they include and their refund and repairs policy (if any). See an example of a quote on page 10.

What you will need to pay

- + Assessment/service fees (if any)
- + Price of the hearing aid
- Hearing aid subsidy

= Balance 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.

Hearing aids are carefully selected by your approved assessor to meet your hearing needs. They are highly technical devices that require expert fitting and follow-up. Cheaper hearing aids may not be the best aids for you.

An overview of the differences between types of hearing aids

Type of hearing aid	Hearing aid features – benefits and limitations
Basic \$1,200 or less	<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 \$1,200 to \$3,000	<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 \$3,000 and more	<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. If the manufacturer's warranty does not cover the repair, you will need to pay for repair costs yourself.

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. It's a good idea to discuss how much the repairs might cost before you agree to them.

Certain styles of hearing aids are less likely to need repairs. Discuss this with your assessor when you are deciding which style to choose.

To make sure you can get a full warranty and support for the hearing aids, and they are safe to use, the model you select must be on the Ministry of Health's Approved Hearing Aid List.

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

Insurance

It's a good idea to insure your hearing aids. Most home contents insurance will cover hearing aids, but you may need to tell your insurer that you have bought them and update your policy. Look after them because, if something happens to them, you cannot get another Ministry of Health subsidy to help you replace your hearing aids for six years after you have received a Hearing Aid Subsidy.

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 for 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.

The Hearing Aid Subsidy can only be used for new hearing aids purchased and fitted in New Zealand through an approved assessor.

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:					
Deposit					
Non-refundable fee:					
Services included in fitting fee:					
Hearing aid subsidy: \$511.11 per hearing aid					
Total cost to client:					
Ongoing costs:					
Battery size:		Price/Pack:			
Standard repair charges for brand attached.					

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

