

Hearing loss and hearing aids



One in every six Australians is directly affected by hearing loss¹, are you one of them?

Possible signs of hearing loss:

- Thinking that people mumble or do not talk clearly.
- Avoiding some situations because you have difficulty hearing.
- Having difficulty hearing people clearly if they are not facing you.
- Needing the TV volume louder than other listeners.
- Difficulty hearing in groups of people, or when there is background noise.
- Difficulty hearing clearly over the phone, or not hearing the phone ring.
- Asking for people to repeat what they have said.
- Experiencing noises in the ears (tinnitus).

Do you know where you can receive help to measure and manage your hearing loss?

- There are different degrees and types of hearing loss, so it is important that you see a clinician who is trained and qualified to assist with your hearing needs.
- Professionals who deal with hearing are called **Audiologists** and they will have a Masters level qualification in hearing science and rehabilitation.
- If you have noticed that you or a friend is having difficulty hearing, then a hearing assessment with an audiologist may be needed.

The quickest and easiest way to obtain a routine hearing test is to attend any private or community clinic (a list of providers can be found at www.audiology.asn.au). Audiologists at The Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital (the Eye and Ear) provide **specialist** hearing services and are therefore not involved in hearing rehabilitation (ie routine hearing checks, provision of hearing aids).

If you have noticed a sudden change in your hearing, please present to a hospital emergency department immediately.

What if I need a hearing aid?

A hearing aid is a small, programmable amplifying device that is worn either in the ear or behind the ear. Hearing aids help most people with a hearing loss, even though they cannot restore normal hearing. Hearing aids aim to provide more useful sound information and therefore help to improve communication.

Hearing aids should be individually programmed by an audiologist to suit your hearing loss. This way your access to appropriate sounds is maximised and the hearing aid is definitely set at a safe level for your remaining hearing.

How do I get a hearing aid?

Some people will be eligible for subsidised hearing services through the Hearing Services Voucher Scheme, whilst others will have to fund the purchase of a hearing aid privately.



The Office of Hearing Services Voucher System is a Government scheme whereby eligible people can apply to access free or subsidised hearing services in the community. A Hearing Services Voucher provides access to a comprehensive range of subsidised hearing services including hearing tests and hearing aid fittings.

Am I eligible for a voucher?

You can apply for a Hearing Services Voucher if you are an Australian citizen or permanent resident who is also:

- a pension concession card holder
- a member of the Australian Defence Force
- a Department of Veterans Affairs pensioner
- a client receiving sickness allowance from Centrelink
- a Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services referred client
- a dependant of a person in an Office of Hearing Services eligible category
- a child or young adult up to the age of 26.

If you are eligible you can complete an 'Application for a Hearing Services Voucher' form to access the scheme and receive more information. These forms can be obtained from the Eye and Ear, your doctor or the Office of Hearing Services.

The Office of Hearing Services contact information:

Phone: 1800 686 126
TTY: 1800 500 4986
Email: hearing@health.gov.au
Website: www.health.gov.au/hear

What if I am not eligible for subsidised services?

People who are not eligible for the Hearing Services Voucher Scheme will have to fund the purchase of their hearing aids. Some private health insurance extras include hearing aids, depending on individual policies. Medicare does not cover hearing aids.

To investigate the costs and process involved in the private purchase of a hearing aid, speak to your local audiologist for professional advice.

You can contact **Audiology Australia** to access the **Audiology Services Directory** to find your local service.

Phone: (03) 9416 4606
Website: www.audiology.asn.au

¹*Listen Hear! The economic impact and cost of hearing loss in Australia (2006).*
www.audiology.asn.au/pdf/ListenHearFinal.pdf

