

# Guide to Getting Hearing Aids



## Hearing Aid Funding Scheme

If you have hearing loss, hearing aids may be part of the solution to improve your hearing.

Disability Support Services (DSS), Ministry of Social Development may be able to contribute towards the cost of buying hearing aids, through the Hearing Aid Funding scheme.



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# Will Disability Support Services help pay for my hearing aids?

Disability Support Services (DSS) 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 DSS booklet [disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services/equipment-and-aids/deaf-or-hearing-loss-equipment-for-adults](http://disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services/equipment-and-aids/deaf-or-hearing-loss-equipment-for-adults).

To find out if you can get funding, ask an audiology service or go to the DSS website Deaf or hearing loss equipment for adults.

## The Hearing Aid Funding Scheme

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

Adults are eligible if they:

- have had a significant hearing loss from childhood
- have had onset of sudden and significant hearing loss during adulthood
- 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 only covers the price of the hearing aid. It does not cover assessment or fitting fees.

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.

Only audiologists and audiometrists who are full members of the New Zealand Audiological Society (MNZAS) can access the DSS, MSD Hearing Aid Funding Scheme for their clients.

Check that your audiologist/audiometrist is an approved assessor on the Audiological Society – website [audiology.org.nz/for-the-public/find-your-nearest-mnzas-audiologist/](http://audiology.org.nz/for-the-public/find-your-nearest-mnzas-audiologist/).

Depending on the cause of your hearing loss, 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 these organisations, you cannot also get support from the DSS Hearing Aid Funding Scheme.

## **Hearing assessment and 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 the solution, the approved assessor will guide you through the process of getting them.



## What to expect from the hearing aid process

### 1. Assessments

Your approved assessor will assess your hearing and your hearing needs. They will ask about your listening needs at home, work, and socially. They will also ask about your abilities to use and wear a hearing aid.

### 2. Recommendation

Following these assessments, hearing aids may be recommended as part of the solution for improving your hearing.

If hearing aids are not recommended, you can get free advice on how to manage your hearing loss. Your Way | Kia Roha – Supporting you to live the life you choose ([yourwaykiaroha.nz](http://yourwaykiaroha.nz))

### 3. Selection of hearing aids

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

### 4. Fitting

They will fit and programme your hearing aids 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. If you have any problems, they can adjust them for you. You will probably need more than one appointment to get the hearing aids right for you.

If the hearing aids still do not work for you, you can return them during the trial period. 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 proceed.

### 6. Final decision

After adequately trying hearing aids, you will need to decide if the hearing aids are meeting your needs.

If you want to go ahead with them, your approved assessor will apply for funding for the hearing aids.

## Types of hearing aids and technology

Hearing aids come in a range of styles and technology levels to suit different hearing needs and personal situations. Your approved assessor will discuss the pros and cons of different styles and technologies with you, so you can make an informed decision about what hearing aid you want to try.

### Three main types of hearing aids

#### Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids:

- sit behind the ear with a sound tube going into the ear
- are usually larger and easier to physically manage than in-the-ear models.

#### In-the-ear (ITE) hearing aids:

- fit completely in the ear
- may be more 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.

#### Receiver-in-the-canal hearing aids:

- most of the hearing aid computer is behind the ear, with a thin wire and receiver going in the ear
- the receiver can be changed if a your hearing changes
- the receiver in the ear canal is prone to wax and moisture, so you need to be diligent at cleaning the aid and replacing the small wax filter.

All three styles of hearing aids are available:

- to suit different levels of hearing loss
- with rechargeable batteries or disposable batteries
- in a range of sizes, shapes and colours.



## Other features (accessories)

Some hearing aids have additional features and options. These include:

- capabilities to work with other devices to provide better listening through a phone, TV or public sound system (such as at a theatre or church)
- a remote control so that you can adjust them without using a button on the hearing aid
- optional apps that can be downloaded onto your smartphone and used to control your hearing aids.

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.

On the next page there 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 different types of hearing aids

Types of hearing aids	Hearing aids features, benefits, and limitations
Basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suits people who usually talk to one or two people at a time (for example, at home or in a quiet setting).</li><li>• Suits people who have a quiet lifestyle.</li><li>• May not be suitable for all types of hearing loss.</li><li>• May not be as helpful as higher-range models in demanding or complex listening situations.</li></ul>
Mid-range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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).</li><li>• May not provide benefits in all listening environments.</li></ul>
High-range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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).</li><li>• Is a more expensive option.</li><li>• Could provide more features than are needed.</li></ul>



## Warranty, repairs and guarantees

It is usual 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 won't have to pay for the repairs if you buy your hearing aids through the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme and currently meet the eligibility criteria.

For children's hearing aids, your approved assessor arranges for repairs through a Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education Centre – [kotakureo.school.nz/parents-and-whanau/](http://kotakureo.school.nz/parents-and-whanau/)

## Insurance

It is your responsibility to look after your hearing aids that DSS, MSD has paid for.

If something happens to them, you are unlikely to get help to replace your hearing aids for six years after you got the hearing aids. For children, funding is available no more than three times in six years.

It is a good idea to insure your hearing aids. Most home contents insurance will cover hearing aids, but you may need to advise your insurer that you have them and update your policy. Parents and caregivers may wish to set up a saving account for their children's hearing aids.

## 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. Eligible adults will need to buy hearing aid batteries yourself. You can also select hearing aids with rechargeable batteries that can be charged overnight in a charger.

Rechargeable batteries may need to be replaced every 2-3 years, and your approved assessor will send them to the manufacturer when required. There is usually a cost for the replacement battery.

The cost of batteries can vary, so it's a good idea to check the size and price before you decide on a specific hearing aid model. 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 considering getting.

Hearing aid repairs under the Hearing Aid Funding Scheme do not include replacing consumable items (e.g. batteries), repairing a hearing aid if the repair is covered by warranty and the cost of assessing or fitting a repaired hearing aid by any person.

For children, hearing aid batteries and repair can be funded through Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education Centre – [kotakureo.school.nz/parents-and-whanau/](http://kotakureo.school.nz/parents-and-whanau/)

## **Other DSS funded support for managing hearing loss**

Personalised support to help manage hearing impairment – at home, at work and in social situations is available through Your Way Kia Roha to eligible people.

Services provided include basic hearing evaluation, hearing needs assessment, referral, advice, community information and training and skill enhancement in adapting to life with a hearing loss.

It does not include skilled audiological or otological interventions, social support, counselling or other services that can be provided elsewhere in the community.

Find a hearing clinic near you – [yourwaykiaroha.nz/hearing/find-a-clinic/](http://yourwaykiaroha.nz/hearing/find-a-clinic/)



## Other help with costs for hearing loss

Financial support may also be available through Work and Income, including:

- **Disability Allowance – Work and Income** You may be eligible for support for **ongoing** costs related to hearing loss through a Disability Allowance from MSD. You don't need to be on a benefit to be eligible for a Disability Allowance, but it is income tested. The Disability Allowance can be paid for both children under 18 years and adults who have ongoing extra costs because of a disability or illness. While it does not cover the cost of a hearing aid itself, it can cover the **ongoing** hearing loss-related costs such as hearing aid batteries, regular visits to your doctor, prescriptions or travel to appointments related to ill health or disability.

More eligibility information, including the income limits can be found at [workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/disability-allowance.html](http://workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/disability-allowance.html)

- **Child Disability Allowance – Work and Income**  
This is for the main carer of a child or young person under 18 years who has a serious illness or disability and needs constant care and attention.

More information can be found at [workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/child-disability-allowance.html](http://workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/child-disability-allowance.html).

## Complaints: How to make a complaint or give feedback

We aim to improve our service by listening to your suggestions about how to improve service delivery and by resolving complaints, where possible.

If you have concerns about the actions of your approved assessor, you should raise this with your provider in the first instance.

If this does not resolve the issue, or you are not comfortable talking to your provider, you have the right to direct your complaints to the Health and Disability Commissioner [hdc.org.nz/making-a-complaint/complaint-process/](http://hdc.org.nz/making-a-complaint/complaint-process/) and to DSS/MSD.

## Make a complaint about DSS | Disability Support Services

You can contact DSS by:

- emailing at [info@disabilitysupport.govt.nz](mailto:info@disabilitysupport.govt.nz) or
- writing to:

Disability Support Services  
Ministry of Social Development  
Reply Paid: 262204  
PO Box 1556  
Wellington 6140

## 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 unhappy 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 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 Health New Zealand/former District Health Boards do not charge for assessments but in some cases may charge a separate fitting fee for adults
- You will need to pay for hearing aid batteries. Please refer to the section under batteries on page 12 for information on financial support options.

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 in Appendix 1 on page 15.

#### **Audiologist/audiometrist in private practice**

Costs

- + Audiology assessment service
- + Assessment/service fees (if any)
- + Hearing aid batteries

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= Total you pay

#### **Audiologist/audiometrist based in public hospitals**

Costs

- + Audiology assessment service
- + Hearing aid fitting fees

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= Total you pay

## Appendix 1: 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 products/s to trial:					
	Brand	Model	Price	No.	Total (incl. GST)
Hearing aids/s:					
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 DSS, MSD's Hearing Aid Services Manager:  
Enable New Zealand

Freephone: 0800 ENABLE (362 253)

## **Disability Support Services**



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Website: [enable.co.nz](http://enable.co.nz)

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