

Making life easier

Products and services to help you hear

Hearing loss is often frustrating and frequently tiring, but there are products and services that can make life easier.

AT A GLANCE

- Devices and services exist to help:
 - Hearing on the phone and hearing the phone ring.
 - Watching TV and movies or listening to music.
 - In social situations, events and meetings.
 - Alerting you to the doorbell, alarm clock, smoke alarm, etc.

These phones can have:

- A louder ring
- An adjustable ring tone with a choice of pitches
- A light that flashes when the phone rings
- Larger buttons
- Compatibility with telecoil- and/or Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids.

ON THE PHONE

Landline phones

Amplified and hearing aid-compatible phones, which plug into the regular phone jack, have features that make it easier for people with hearing impairment to use a landline phone.

Other devices that can be used with standard phones include:

- In-line amplifiers which plug in between your phone and the handset and amplify all the sound coming down the phone line
- Ringer/flasher units which amplify the ring and/or flash when the phone rings



- in-line Bluetooth adaptors to connect directly with some hearing aids to make talking on the phone clearer and easier.

Mobile phones

Devices to assist with the use with mobile phones include:

- Sound amplifiers
- Neck loops for using with the telecoil on your hearing aid
- Bluetooth capability allowing you to make a wireless connection between you and the cellphone using Bluetooth technology.



NZ Relay Service

If making telephone sound louder and clearer isn't working, the NZ Relay Service is available. It involves an operator at a specialist relay call centre being part of the call and typing what the other person is saying, with the text being displayed on the hearing-impaired/deaf caller's special phone.

- **Voice carry-over:** The hearing impaired person speaks to the caller or listener directly. When the caller or listener responds, the operator types their words verbatim, and they appear on a screen on the hearing-impaired/deaf person's phone.

- **Hearing carry-over:** This works similarly to voice carry over but instead the hearing-impaired/deaf person does not speak directly to the caller/listener but types their words; the operator then reads them to the caller or listener.
- **Speech to speech:** The operator is on-hand listening to the conversation but only intervenes to help the hearing-impaired/deaf person if needed.
- **Email and Internet services:** These services use a live connection over the Internet or by email, and what the operator types appears on your computer screen. If you establish a conference call in tandem with this service you can hear the caller's voice and read what they are saying at the same time.

Phone 0800 4715 715 or refer to www.nzrelay.co.nz

WATCHING TV AND MOVIES AND LISTENING TO MUSIC

Headphones - Amplifying headphones are available that plug into the TV or stereo with volume control to adjust to suit an individual's hearing loss.

Teletext – This is a free news and information service from TVNZ available 24 hours a day on Teletext-compatible TVs. Teletext is controlled by the TV's remote control. To access it push the Teletext button on the remote – usually a square motif filled with horizontal lines – and the Teletext home page (page 100) will appear on screen showing what information is available and its "page" number. Either type the page number or access colour-coded pages using the corresponding coloured button on the remote control. Information available includes news, weather, financial market information, and television captioning information.

Captions on TV – Many programmes on the free-to-air channels – except Prime – are captioned, with the text displayed at the bottom of the screen. The subtitles show the dialogue and often document what is happening, including descriptions of sounds. To access the captions, push the Teletext button on the remote control and type 801. To find out which programmes are captioned type 320. Newspaper and other television guides often print an ear symbol next to the listing to show which programmes are captioned.

Captioned movies – A captioning service is provided by the New Zealand cinema industry for many movies and are presented on-screen in the same way as TV captions. Because of the cost of the equipment, these are usually only available at selected cinemas in the three main centres and are usually shown in special sessions to avoid disruption to other patrons. To find out what captioned movies are being screened and when check www.captionmovies.co.nz or send an email to subscribe@captionmovies.co.nz with the city (Auck, Wgtn, Chch or national) in the subject line to get regular session updates by email. Cinema websites and newspaper directories may also include captioning information.

Captioned DVDs – Many DVDs have a subtitles option and this is displayed in the “special features” information section on the back of the DVD jacket. When you start the DVD the subtitles option is usually displayed on the main menu or under the “languages” option. Highlight the option and click “Enter”. If the DVD says it has subtitles but you can’t find it in the menus, some DVD players have a “subtitles” button – use this to access subtitles.

Home Loops and Bluetooth wireless adaptors

- Bluetooth adaptors and audio loops (see below) can be installed in the home, to provide clearer and better-quality sound.

OUT AND ABOUT

Loop systems

An audio loop system comprises a loop of wire with an amplifier installed in a building or a room, or even at a desk such as a check-in counter at an airport. A miniature version is also available that fits around the person’s neck called a neck loop. The loop can also be connected to a public address system, television or stereo. Sound waves from these sources are converted into an electric current, amplified and sent through the loop, which emits a low-intensity magnetic field. The field is picked up by the telecoil of a hearing aid and converted back into sound. The system also eliminates most background noise.

Hearing Dogs

Hearing dogs provide similar support to deaf or hearing-impaired people that guide dogs do for the blind and vision-impaired. They have access to public places, including restaurants and cafes, and, as working dogs, wear a special coat.

Hearing dogs respond to sounds by gentling pawing or signalling to their handler common sounds - like the phone ringing, smoke alarms, fire alarms, alarm clocks, door knocking, door bells, phone or fax ringing.



Hearing Dogs for Deaf People NZ is a Charitable Trust which operates nationwide to provide deaf and hearing-impaired people with a dog trained to help in everyday life.

For more information including contact details, refer to www.hearingdogs.org.nz

Bluetooth

Bluetooth technology is available in some hearing aids and allows hearing aids to make a wireless connection with portable and electronic devices such as mobile phones, MP3 players, landline phones and TV, when they are in range of each other.

This allows for clearer and more precise sound for the hearing aid-wearer.

Alerting devices

A range of devices allow you to be aware of activity without relying solely on your hearing.

These include:

- Alarm clocks with ultra loud, vibrating, or light alerts
- A pager-type device that alerts you to doorbells and baby alarms, usually by vibrating
- Smoke alarms that activate a strobe light, are ultra-loud or activate a pager-type device.

Many Hearing Associations, audiologists, and other organisations stock these items.

