

Guide to  
Hearing Loss  
& Hearing Aid  
Prescription

*Helping People  
Hear and Enjoy Life*



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“ The problems of deafness are deeper and more complex, if not more important than those of blindness. Deafness is a much worse misfortune. For it means the loss of the most vital stimulus - the sound of the voice that brings language, sets thoughts astir, and keeps us in the intellectual company of man. ”

Helen Keller

Helen Adams Keller was an American author, political activist, and lecturer. She was the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.

# Your Journey to Better Hearing

For most of us, hearing is something we take for granted. In fact, it is often not until we start to experience hearing loss that we appreciate just how precious our hearing is.

Whether catching up with friends at a café or speaking to family on the phone, our hearing is what keeps us connected to our loved ones and the people around us. This is why hearing loss can be such an isolating experience.

Typically, hearing loss occurs gradually and is often not even noticed at first. We tend to explain away the initial symptoms without realising we may be experiencing hearing loss:



“

I don't know why they make these places so noisy – it's impossible for anyone to hear!

”

But as the hearing loss progresses, we start to notice other symptoms - people sound like they are mumbling and the TV volume always needs to be turned up. It is at this stage we begin to acknowledge that our symptoms may be due to hearing loss - and this is when we can begin our journey to better hearing.

## **The first step in this journey is gathering information.**

This booklet provides easy-to-understand information on hearing loss and hearing aids, to help you make an informed decision on what to do next.

Once you have a clearer understanding of hearing loss and the options available to you, you will be ready to consult a hearing specialist, who can help you take the next steps to better hearing.

# Facts & Figures About Hearing

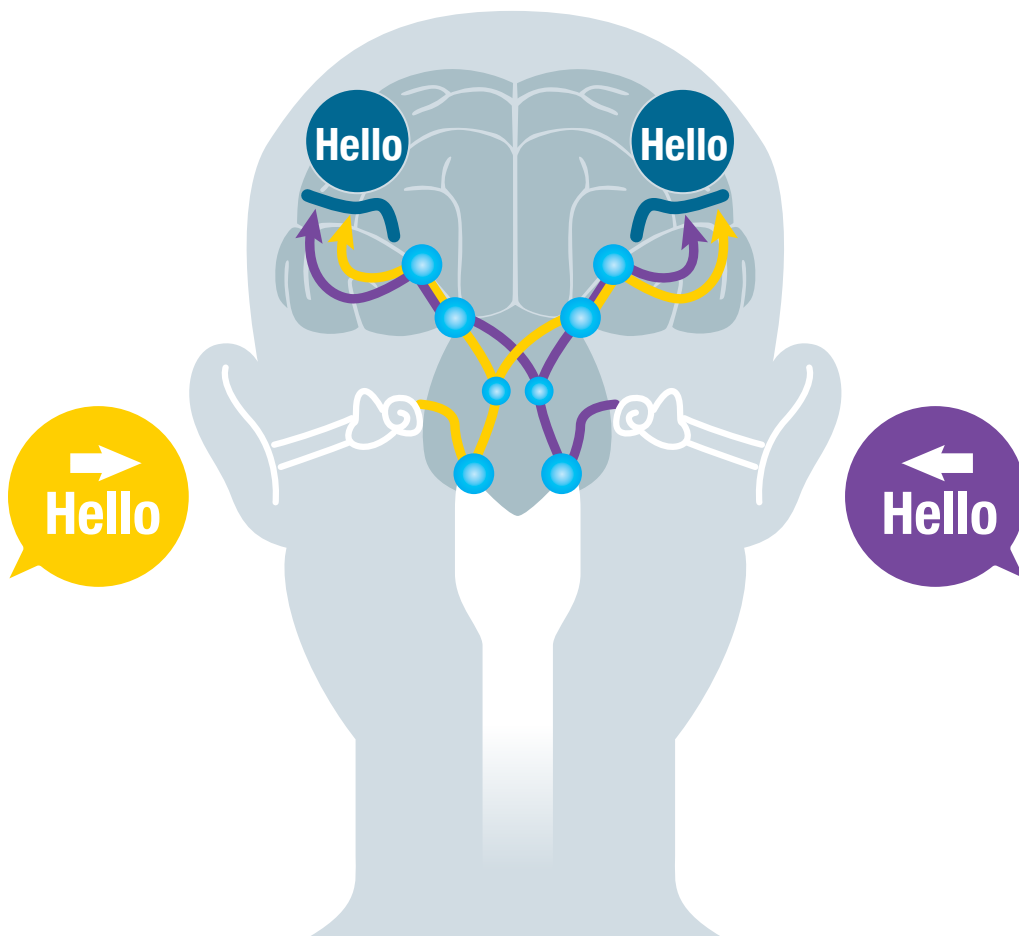
## Hearing and Our Brains

When we are born, our brain can only make basic distinctions about the sounds it hears – for example, a newborn baby will be startled by a sudden loud noise, but won't be able to distinguish other sounds.

However, it doesn't take long for our brain to develop 'auditory maps' to interpret the different sounds it hears. By the age of eight, we are capable of focusing in on one particular voice, even in a noisy room.

The way our brain interprets sound is called auditory processing – and the better we are at processing sounds, the better we can hear.

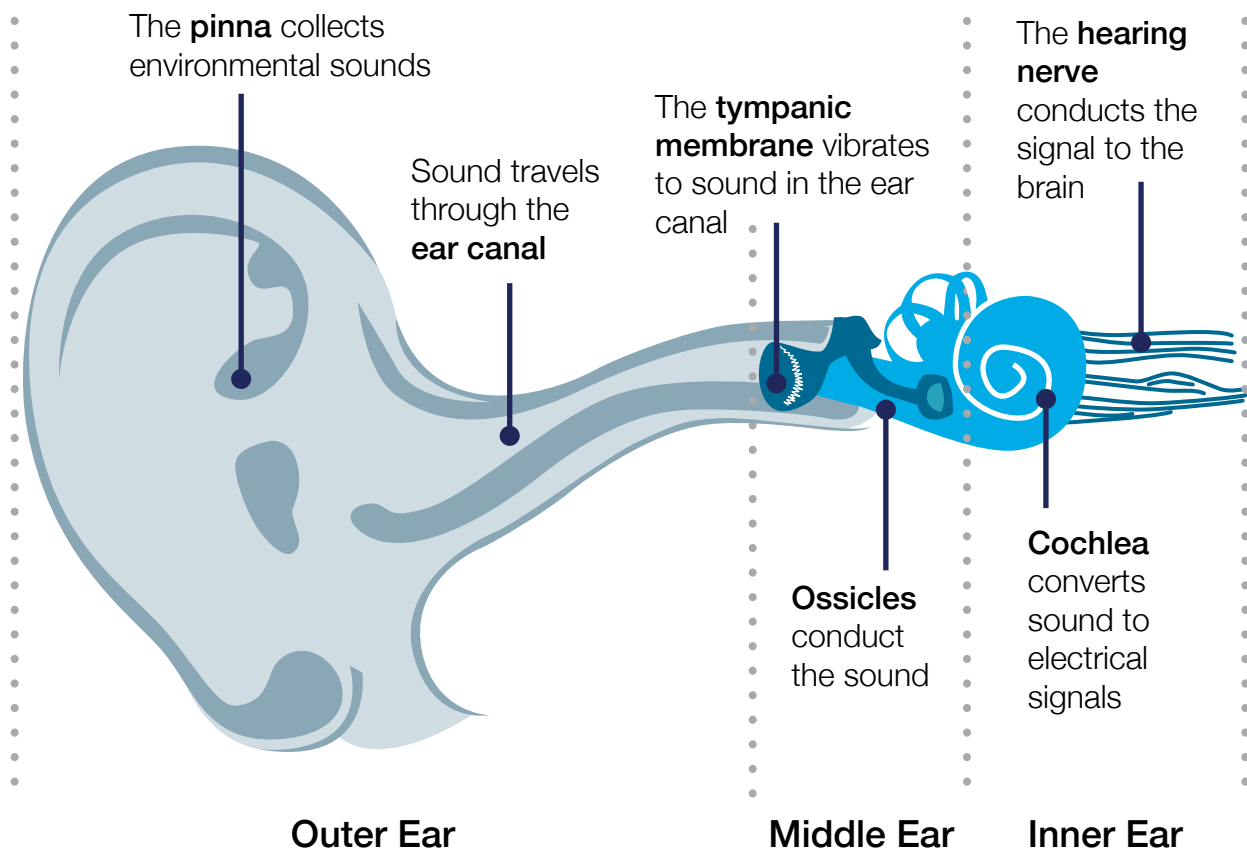
Hearing loss can affect our auditory processing ability, as it reduces the amount of information that travels from our ears to our brain. This makes it difficult to do things like follow a conversation in a place with lots of background noise.



# Facts & Figures About Hearing

## How Does Sound Reach Our Brains?

- 1 Sound travels through the ear canal of the outer ear, where it impacts the ear drum.
- 2 The sound causes the bones of the middle ear to vibrate, which in turn stimulates sensory hair cells in the cochlea of the inner ear.
- 3 The hair cells turn the sound waves into nerve impulses that are sent to the brain, which will then determine the sound.



# Hearing Loss Facts

- ▶ Hearing loss is the second most common health issue in the world
- ▶ Hearing loss affects more people than Parkinson's, epilepsy, Alzheimer's and diabetes combined



**1 in 6**  
Australians has  
a hearing impairment



**1 in 3**  
people over the age of 65  
suffers from hearing loss

Despite being a very common issue, hearing loss remains a condition that people are reluctant to accept – even today, there is still a social stigma around it.

However, it shouldn't be this way. Hearing, just like any other part of our body, deteriorates as we age. What's more, hearing loss is something that most of us will experience at some point in our lives.

## What Causes Hearing Loss?

Hearing loss can be caused by a variety of factors. The most common causes of hearing loss are:

head injuries  
noise exposure  
birth defects **Age** genetics  
ototoxic medication

# Age-Related Hearing Loss

Hearing loss due to age is called **prebycusis**. Prebycusis often starts to affect people aged in their late 50s to early 60s.

Higher sound frequencies are the most affected by age-related hearing loss, which can make it difficult to hear **soft consonant speech** and **conversations in places with background noise**.

Difficulties hearing soft consonant speech can make it seem as though people are mumbling:

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dogs

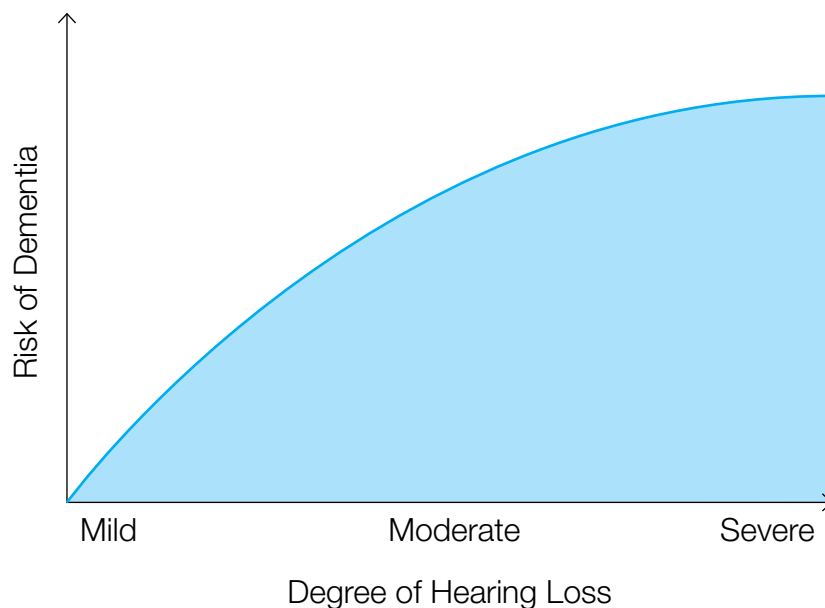
Conversation can become easily hidden by background noise:

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dogs

## The Link Between Hearing Loss and Dementia

Untreated hearing loss has been linked with cognitive decline and dementia. This risk increases with the degree (severity) of hearing loss.

As the effects of hearing loss increase with age, elderly people are more at risk of dementia, even with mild hearing losses.



# Better Hearing Leads to More Independent Living

Hearing loss has been linked to **social isolation, depression** and even **increased risk of falling** in the elderly.



2012 study found a **3x great risk** of falling in elderly with hearing loss



People with hearing loss are at a greater risk of **depression** and **social isolation**

However, there is growing evidence to show that the use of hearing aids can reduce these issues, as well as decrease cognitive decline and dementia.

By using hearing aids, people experiencing hearing loss are able to live independently for longer, compared with those who have untreated hearing loss.



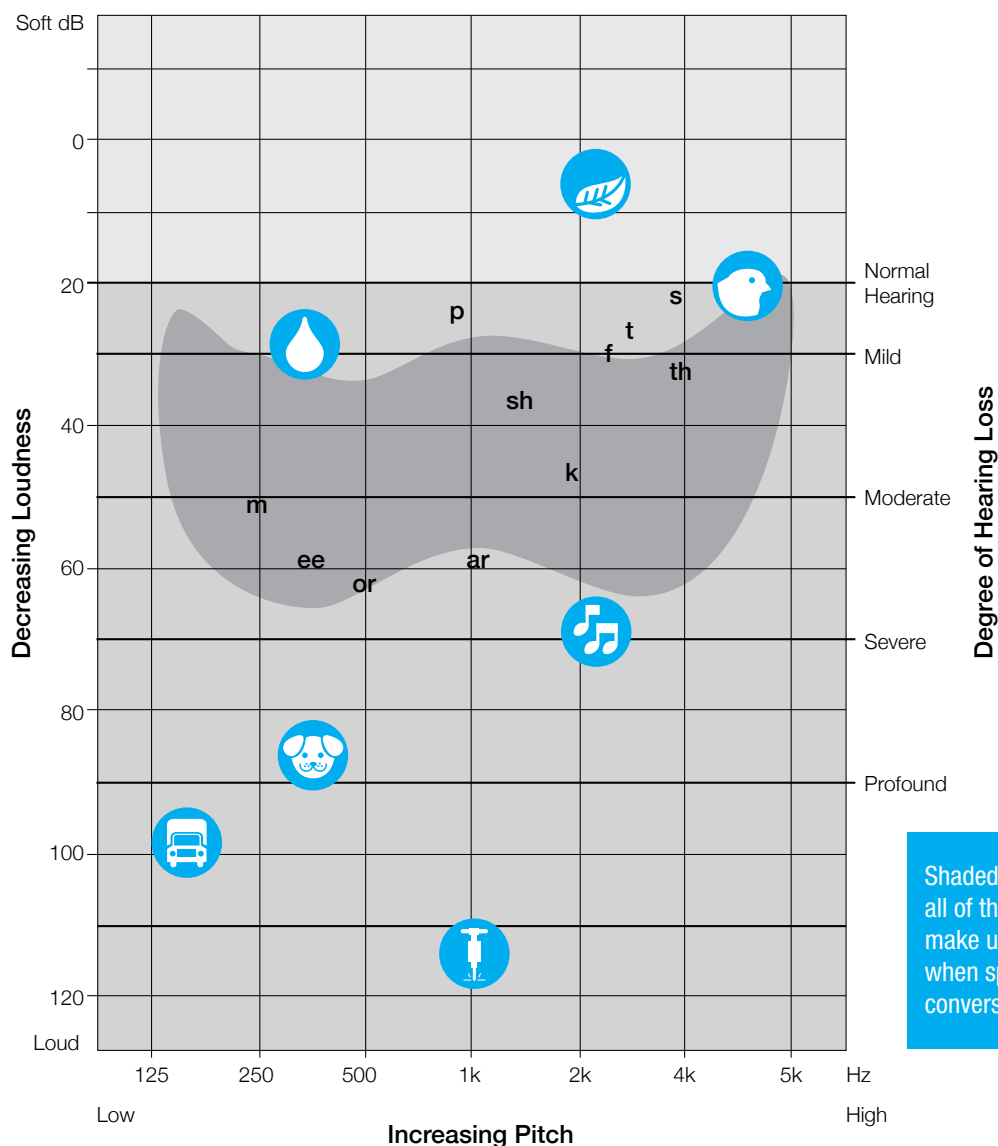
Advances in hearing technology now make it possible to give better hearing to over 95% of people with hearing loss.



# Degrees of Hearing Loss

The normal hearing threshold is **25dB and below** at all sound frequencies.  
 If your hearing threshold is above this range, you are classified as having hearing loss.

<b>Mild degree</b> (26-40dB)	<b>Soft speech</b> and <b>speech from a distance</b> is difficult to hear
<b>Moderate degree</b> (41-55dB)	<b>Typical conversational speech</b> is hard to follow
<b>Moderately Severe degree</b> (56-70dB)	<b>Only loud speech</b> can be heard
<b>Severe degree</b> (71-90dB)	<b>Even loud speech</b> is hard to follow
<b>Profound</b> (91dB+)	Considered <b>“deaf”</b>



Shaded figure represents all of the sounds that make up the human voice when speaking at normal conversational levels.

# Signs of Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is a gradual process and can often go unrecognised for many years. As with most impairments, the signs of hearing loss differ from person to person.

The questionnaire below is a useful guide for assessing whether you or someone you know may be experiencing hearing loss.

## Hearing Loss Questionnaire

**Loss of high pitch sounds:** Often, the first sounds to disappear are the high frequency sounds. These make up the softer high frequency speech sounds, such as the consonant sounds “s”, “f” and “p”, as well as the phonemes “ch”, “th” and “sh”. The voices of women and children are often softer and higher-pitched, so are likely to be more difficult to hear.

- 1. Do you sometimes feel certain people sound less clear or seem to mumble when they speak?  YES  NO
  - 2. Do you find some women’s and children’s voices difficult to hear?  YES  NO
  - 3. Do you often have to ask people to repeat themselves?  YES  NO
- 

**Distance listening:** Sounds become softer the further they travel – if the distance is doubled, the sound energy is reduced by half. People with hearing loss often have more difficulty hearing distant sounds because of their softer nature.

- 4. Do you find it difficult to hear at a meeting when you are seated at the back?  YES  NO
- 5. Do you have difficulty hearing at a church, concert hall or other places of public gatherings?  YES  NO
- 6. Do you have difficulty hearing people when they speak to you from another room of the house?  YES  NO
- 7. Do you require the TV to be louder than others in the room?  YES  NO

**Hearing in noisy places:** Our brain uses important frequency cues to help us tell the differences between sounds – this makes it easy for our brain to lock into sounds from one direction, while ignoring sounds from other directions. Unfortunately, as we lose our hearing some of these subtle frequency differences are not heard, making it difficult to focus on certain sounds while filtering out others.

8. Do you have difficulty following group conversations?  YES  NO

9. Do you sometimes find it difficult to hear at family gatherings?  YES  NO

10. Do you try to avoid certain cafes, restaurants and shops because they are too noisy?  YES  NO

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**Tinnitus (ringing ears):** Tinnitus or ringing in the ears is often a symptom of hearing loss. As the sensory cells in the part of the ear called the cochlea die off, the brain stops receiving auditory signals – instead, it sometimes generates its own ‘phantom’ signals, which creates this ringing in the ears.

11. Do you experience ringing in the ears?  YES  NO

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**If you answered YES to three or more questions,  
you may be experiencing hearing loss.**

“Hearing loss is a terrible thing  
because it cannot be repaired”

Pete Townsend

# Getting Your Hearing Assessed

Do you think that you or someone you know may be experiencing hearing loss?  
A hearing test is the best way to find out.

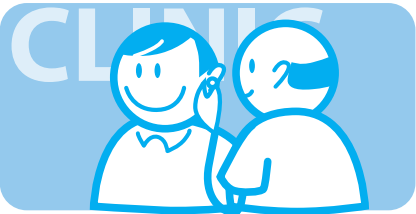
And the good news is, you can take the first step without having to go into a clinic  
– our **Online Hearing Test** is fast, simple and can be performed at home.



## ONLINE HEARING TEST - quick, easy and in the comfort of your own home!

Here's how the Online Hearing Test works:

- Visit: [www.thehearingcareshop.com.au/free-online-hearing-test](http://www.thehearingcareshop.com.au/free-online-hearing-test)
- Find a quiet place in your home, making sure you shut windows and doors, and turn off the air con
- For best results, use headphones or earbuds while taking the test
- The test takes approximately 8 minutes
- **Results from the test are reviewed and reported on by a qualified audiologist and emailed to you**



## CLINICAL HEARING TEST - for comprehensive testing

If you're ready to have your hearing assessed and would like some professional advice,  
then a **hearing assessment at a hearing clinic** is for you.

- A full hearing assessment is easy and painless
- The test and consultation takes approximately 60 minutes
- The clinician will examine your ear canals and ear drums, test your middle ear pathways, and measure your hearing thresholds and ability to understand speech at different levels
- The clinician will explain the results to you and, if necessary, make recommendations
- If preferred, the clinician will be happy to send the results to your GP for further advice and a second opinion

To request a hearing test appointment at your local audiology clinic, visit

[www.thehearingcareshop.com.au/hearing-test/](http://www.thehearingcareshop.com.au/hearing-test/)

# Hearings Aids: A Smart Step Towards Better Hearing

For many people, hearing aids are the best solution to improve their hearing.

**But with so many different types of devices to choose from, what do you need to know and how can you help your clinician find the best solution for you?**

To assist you, we've put together some more information on hearing aids and their available features.

## 1 Selecting the right style:

Hearing aids come in a wide variety of styles, from small and completely invisible IIC (Invisible in Canal) models to conventional BTE (Behind-the-Ear) styles.

The most suitable style for you depends on:

- Your preference for discreetness
- Your degree of hearing loss
- The shape of your ear
- Whether you wear glasses
- Your hands' dexterity

**It is best to follow the advice of your clinician when choosing the right hearing aid style for you.**

				
<b>IIC – Invisible in Canal</b>	<b>CIC – Completely in Canal</b>	<b>ITE/ITC – In the Ear</b>	<b>RIC – Receiver in the Ear</b>	<b>BTE – Behind the Ear</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invisible in-ear hearing aid</li><li>• Fits deeper within ear canal</li><li>• Suitable for mild to moderate loss</li><li>• Custom moulded</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sits in the ear canal with limited visibility</li><li>• Suitable for mild to moderate loss</li><li>• Custom moulded*</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sits in the outer ear</li><li>• Host additional features due to larger size, i.e directional microphone</li><li>• Suitable for mild to severe loss</li><li>• Custom moulded</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worn behind the ear, most common style</li><li>• Near invisible when worn</li><li>• Provides for most natural sound as receiver sits within ear canal</li><li>• Suitable for all hearing loss levels</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worn behind the ear</li><li>• Larger device, suitable for those with limited dexterity</li><li>• Suitable for all hearing loss levels, particularly profound</li></ul>
				

\*Siemens Signia Silk is instant fit, no mould required and one of the smallest CIC available

# Hearings Aids: A Smart Step Towards Better Hearing

## 2 Selecting the right features:

Modern digital hearing aids have a suite of technological features. Deciding which of these features are best for you depends on your lifestyle.

Here are the main points to consider:



### Battery

Hearing aids offer both disposable and rechargeable battery options.

**Disposable batteries** are smaller in size, so can be used in smaller hearing aids such as micro-RIC and IIC. Disposable hearing aid batteries are cheaper to use.

**Rechargeable batteries** can last up to 24 hours between charges. Overnight charging replenishes the battery for the next day. Rechargeable hearing aids are especially suited for people with poor eyesight or who lack dexterity in their hands. There is an extra cost for the recharger units.



### Telecoil

If you regularly attend places such as church, the theatre or other public gatherings, you may benefit from having a **telecoil** in your hearing aid.

A telecoil picks up a Loop system that is part of the public announcement system. Using the telecoil can enhance the speaker's voice while reducing unwanted background noises.

A telecoil can also enhance telephone conversations.

You should discuss with your clinician whether you would benefit from a telecoil.

“ It is not the voice that commands a story: it is the ear ”

Italo Calvino

# Hearings Aids: A Smart Step Towards Better Hearing



## Wireless audio streaming

Almost all modern hearing aids have **wireless technology** to enable them to connect to telephones, televisions and other audio devices.

There are two types of wireless streaming technology:

**1. Streamer device.** A streamer device is worn around the neck and streams audio from a mobile phone or other audio device to the hearing aids. Hearing aids that connect to a streamer device can be much smaller.



**2. 2.4GHz Bluetooth.** The latest hearing aids use 2.4GHz Bluetooth technology to connect directly to a smart phone, which can be very convenient. Applications in the phone make it possible to control the hearing aid settings.

*Currently this technology only works with iPhones, but is expected to extend to Android devices soon.*

Some hearing aids with 2.4GHz Bluetooth technology do not have any other streaming technology or telecoil. When selecting a 2.4GHz Bluetooth device, it is recommended to choose one that also has the capability to connect to another streamer device and induction loop system.



# Hearings Aids: A Smart Step Towards Better Hearing



## Binaural Processing

**Binaural processing** is a term used to describe how both the left and right hearing aids communicate with each other, in order to process sounds in a similar way to our ears.

Binaural processing can significantly improve listening comfort and speech understanding in noisy places.

Binaural processing comes in a range of performance levels to suit different lifestyles.



## Performance Level

Hearing aids come in a variety of **performance levels** to suit the needs of the user. Each performance level has a different combination of features, such as processing channels, noise reduction, directional microphones etc.

For example, a hearing aid for basic needs may only have four processing channels, while a hearing aid for advanced needs may have ten processing channels.

The following table outlines different performance levels and can be used as a guide for selecting the best level for your needs:

Essential	Advanced	Premium
<p>Designed for people who socialise once a week and mainly operate in quite environments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One-on-One conversations</li><li>• Watching TV</li><li>• Theatres, lectures and movies</li><li>• In environment with moderate background noise such as shopping centres, and outdoors</li></ul>	<p>Designed for active lifestyles with frequent communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One-on-One conversations</li><li>• Watching TV</li><li>• Theatres, lectures and movies</li><li>• Mobile Phone</li><li>• Small group conversations</li><li>• In loud, noisy environments such as shopping centres, meetings and outdoors</li></ul>	<p>Designed for active and social lifestyle, where speech needs to be enhanced in dynamic environments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One-on-One conversations</li><li>• Watching TV</li><li>• Theatres, lectures and movies</li><li>• Mobile phone</li><li>• Small group conversations</li><li>• Busy restaurant</li><li>• Large gatherings   Big crowds</li><li>• Parties</li><li>• Work</li><li>• In significantly loud, noisy environments such as shopping centres, meetings and outdoors</li></ul>



# How Much Do Hearing Aids Cost?

The cost of hearing aids depends on their performance level.

Each manufacturer offers a different number of performance levels within their range, with a range typically consisting of three or four performance level options.

The below is a guide to approximate costs for each performance level:

Essential Level	Advanced Level	Premium Level
Per Pair: \$3800 - \$4500	Per Pair: \$4500 - \$6000	Per Pair: \$6000 - \$9000

**The Hearing Care Shop guarantees to match or beat any written quote.**

Visit <http://thehearingcareshop.com.au/compare-quote/> to find out more.

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## What Rebates Are Available?

### Health Funds

Most health funds offer rebates on hearing aids, ranging from between \$400 and \$1000 per ear. The rebate amount depends on the health fund and policy type.

### Pensioner and Veteran Services

In Australia, the Commonwealth Office of Hearing Services provides subsidies towards hearing aids for eligible pensioners and veterans. The subsidy is in the form of a voucher that can be used at any Government-accredited clinic.

The voucher can either be used to receive FREE hearing aids with basic performance, or put towards more advanced TOP-UP hearing aids.

**You can find out if you are eligible for a government voucher in two simple steps:**

**STEP 1:** Visit <http://thehearingcareshop.com.au/pensioners-veterans-hearing-services/>

**STEP 2:** Fill out the form

We will check your eligibility and assist you with your application. We can also find the closest accredited hearing clinic to you.

# About The Hearing Care Shop

At The Hearing Care Shop, our goal is to provide you with clear, honest advice on your hearing loss, and dedicated support to find a hearing aid solution that's right for you.

Above all, we pride ourselves on delivering the highest standard of customer care and a truly personal service throughout your journey to better hearing.

## **We have an in-house audiologist...**

Our qualified in-house audiologist is available to answer your questions and provide professional, independent advice and second opinions.

As we are an independent provider with no ties to any manufacturers, our audiologist can give you unbiased advice on the brand of hearing aid that is best suited to your needs.

## **We can locate your closest audiology clinic...**

As the only online hearing store in Australia to be supported by over 200 audiology clinics, we can quickly connect you with a local qualified clinician who'll get to know you and your hearing needs.

## **We provide at-home demonstrations...**

If you are experiencing hearing loss and want to find out whether hearing aids can help, you might like to try one of The Hearing Care Shop's demonstration devices.

These devices act like hearing aids and are programmed to your individual hearing loss. Demonstration devices are available for two week trials\*.

*\*Please refer to terms and conditions*

## **We offer a wide range of hearing aids at the best prices...**

The Hearing Care Shop have access to the best hearing aid brands and models - and we can deliver these to you for the best price, guaranteed! Plus, you can send us your hearing aid quote and we'll match or beat it.

# Starting Your Journey to Better Hearing

## Are you ready to take the next steps and move ahead in your journey to better hearing?

Whether you're simply after some more information or are keen to purchase a hearing aid, The Hearing Care Shop is here to help, every step of the way.

### What to do next

- **Ready to have your hearing tested?**

Find out about our Online Hearing Test or request an appointment for a hearing test at your local clinic

- **Interested in purchasing a hearing aid?**

View our range to browse a wide selection of high quality hearing aids at the lowest prices, guaranteed!

- **Need a second opinion on your hearing loss or hearing aids?**

Get in touch and our qualified audiologist will be happy to assist.

- **Want to compare prices and get a quote?**

Find out about our price-matching service and discover how much you could save.

To speak to our friendly team, contact  
The Hearing Care Shop on **1300 919 664**  
or visit our website at [www.thehearingcareshop.com.au](http://www.thehearingcareshop.com.au)

# Notes on Your Hearing Loss

To help you keep track of your hearing loss, you can use the questions below to record your symptoms and needs. This will help us assist you in finding the best solution for your hearing loss.

## 1. What symptoms of hearing loss do you experience?

E.g. I require the TV to be louder than others; I feel as though people mumble when they talk etc.

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## 2. Have you taken our Online Hearing Test? If yes, what was the result and recommendation?

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## 3. Would you like to get a full hearing assessment at an audiology clinic?

If yes, please provide your postcode so we can locate your closest Partner Clinic.

YES - Your postcode: \_\_\_\_\_  NO

## 4. If you need a hearing aid prescription, please complete below to help our clinician recommend the most appropriate device for you.

Your Budget: \_\_\_\_\_ Required Performance level: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Lifestyle:

What do your typical activities involve, e.g. outings, theatre/movies, church, clubs, shopping, café visits, get-togethers with family/friends etc.?

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## 5. If you are with a health fund, have you contacted them to find out what rebate you are eligible for?

YES  NO

## 6. If you are a pensioner or veteran, have you enrolled in the Government-funded Office of Hearing Services Program? (The Hearing Care Shop can help you apply)

YES  NO