

## Deaf or hearing impaired? – Practical devices to help

You don't need to just 'put up with it'. There are practical devices and services available to help you with everyday living.

Options include

- Amplified telephones
- Alerting devices that vibrate to wake or warn you
- Cordless listening systems
- Television head phones
- Telephone services for people who can't speak on the phone

And with advances in technology, new devices are being launched every day that work for young and old alike. You may have had difficulty hearing for many years. Or perhaps it's been creeping up on you quite recently. Either way, it's always worth finding out about the latest devices.

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### Hearing enhances quality of life

Healthy hearing connects you to the world around you, to people and to nature. And it allows you to keep 'up with the play' in daily life.

With impaired hearing, life can be quite lonely and frustrating. You might have difficulty following or joining in conversations. Or be unable to enjoy common entertainment options like films and television, concerts or live theatre.

Your safety might be at risk too. For example, if you were fast asleep, would you hear the fire alarm? Or the ambulance as you try to cross the road?

### Getting help

For many people, help with hearing impairment may include having hearing aids fitted and learning good communication tactics.

But hearing aids sometimes don't work in every situation or for every person with a hearing problem. Luckily, there are many other practical devices and services that can help too.

### Contact a hearing therapist

The best person to advise you is a hearing therapist. To find one in your areas, call LIFE Unlimited on 0800 008011. LIFE Unlimited Hearing Therapists provide free hearing tests and advice throughout New Zealand.

Here are just some of the devices and services that a hearing therapist might recommend for you. These might be in addition to or instead of hearing aids. You can buy many of the devices on line from Hearing Association offices in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

### Alerting devices

Alerting devices that flash lights, vibrate, chime or emit a sonic boom can tell you when the phone, fax or doorbell rings. They can warn you if your baby is crying or the fire alarm goes off.

Alerting devices include pages, cellphones and vibrating pads that you can put under your pillow at night.

### Amplifying devices

#### Telephones

Amplifying phones are available in both corded and cordless models. They have a louder ring than ordinary phones. You can usually adjust the ring tone and pitch.

Some models flash when they ring. Many models are compatible with hearing aids.

For office phones, in-line amplifiers are a good option. They plug between the telephone base jackpoint and your handset, so you can adjust the volume of the incoming voice.

Some mobile phones have a special neckloop available. This enables the phone to be used with a hearing aid that has a telecoil. For some hearing aids, Bluetooth compatible accessories are available, allowing wireless connection to mobile phones and personal music players. An audiologist or hearing therapist can tell you more about these.

#### Cordless listening systems

There are many cordless devices to help you hear. These are often referred to as *personal listening systems*. Some are designed for use with your television or stereo. Others work well in larger group situations like meetings or family get-togethers.

For transmitting sound, some personal listening systems use FM radio frequencies. The sound travels to a personal receiver like a neckloop or headset with volume control. Other systems use infrared light waves for transmission. Not all require you to have a hearing aid.

### **Help with making phone calls**

If no amplification is enough to help you hear on the phone, you can use the **New Zealand Relay** service. This will let you call any person or organisation with a telephone.

With a special TTY phone, you dial an operator and type what you want to say. The operator reads your message to the person you're calling. The operator types the person's reply and this appears on your telephone screen.

Or if you're able to speak, you can choose the voice carry over service, and just receive the caller's reply in text on your screen.

### **Captioned television and movies**

Did you know that many prime time programmes on TV One, TV2 and TV3 are captioned? These captions are similar to subtitles on a foreign language film, appearing in written form at the bottom of the screen.

With a text-enabled television, activate the teletext function with your remote control, then press 801. Pressing 320 takes you to a list of subtitled programmes.

Latest release movies with captions also play throughout New Zealand everyday. To find out what's scheduled, visit [www.captionmovies.co.nz](http://www.captionmovies.co.nz)

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New devices and services are being developed every day to help people with hearing loss. But remember, one size never fits all. Be sure to seek professional advice about what's best for you.

### **More information & support**

#### **NFD (National Foundation for the Deaf)**

[www.nfd.org.nz](http://www.nfd.org.nz)

205 Parnell Road

PO Box 37729, Parnell, Auckland 1151

Ph 0800 867446

Tel/TTY 09 3072922

Fax 09 3072923

Email [enquiries@nfd.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@nfd.org.nz)

#### **Hearing Therapists – LIFE Unlimited**

[www.life.nzl.org](http://www.life.nzl.org)

Central House, Level 5

26 Brandon Street, Wellington

Ph 0800 008011

Tel 04 4995851

Fax 04 4995853

Email [info@life.nzl.org](mailto:info@life.nzl.org)

#### **The Hearing Association**

[www.hearing.org.nz](http://www.hearing.org.nz)

c/- Suite 1, 5 Bouverie Street, Petone

PO Box 5876, Lambton Quay, Wellington 6145

Ph 0800 233445

Tel 04 9396754

Fax 04 9396719

Email [enquiries@hearing.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@hearing.org.nz)

#### **New Zealand Relay**

[www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)

Help Desk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

TTY 0800 4 713 713

Ph 0800 4 715 715

Fax 0800 4 FAX NZR (329 697)

We've prepared these fact sheets using information from external sources and advice from NZ based experts. Please feel free to copy or use any of the material.

The information, while accurate at time of printing cannot replace expert advice from a hearing professional. Always seek help quickly for any ear or hearing problem.

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