

Funding for Hearing Aids and other Assistive Devices

Audiologists and hearing therapists can advise you about funding options available. There is no charge for visits to hearing therapists and while they do not fit hearing aids themselves, they can advise on types of aids available, funding options, and refer you to either a public or private audiologist. Hearing Therapists also have information about other devices that assist hearing that may be appropriate in some cases.

Phone 0800 008011 to contact your nearest Life Unlimited Hearing Therapist.

Some audiology groups offer a free initial visit, at which funding options would be discussed. If you are entitled to a subsidy, your audiologist will help arrange it for you. *NB You only receive funding assistance if you have your hearing aids fitted by a qualified audiologist - a Member of the NZ Audiological Society (MNZAS).*

Children's Hearing Aid Costs

Hearing aids for children under the age of 18 (or under 21 years of age while in fulltime education) are fitted at no cost to their families through a provision in the health system known as the "Special Aid Fund". Funding is available for both new and replacement hearing aids. There is also funding available for hearing aid repairs and batteries.

Universal Hearing Aid Subsidy

A basic hearing aid subsidy of \$198 per aid is available to all adult patients once every 5 years. If you need two aids, the subsidy is doubled to \$356. It is available for both new and replacement aids, so long as you have not claimed within the last 5 years. The subsidy is

administered by the audiologist, and most prices that are quoted at audiology clinics will already have this subsidy deducted from the price, but ask if you are unsure. This subsidy is only available if you purchase your aid from a qualified audiologist (MNZAS).

Accident Compensation Commission (ACC)

ACC may be able to help if your hearing loss is the result of:

- Exposure to a noisy work environment
- Exposure to a sudden, extremely loud noise

ACC doesn't cover congenital hearing loss, age-related or illness-related hearing loss and funding is generally not available if the noise exposure occurred before the introduction of the ACC scheme in 1972.

If you think are entitled to ACC funding you should contact your General Practitioner who can initiate an ACC claim for you. Once the claim has been started you will need to see an Ear Nose and Throat specialist, to have the cause of your hearing loss diagnosed, and to see an audiologist (MNZAS), for a full audiological assessment. ACC will then make a decision regarding whether they will provide funding for the hearing aids and how much they will provide.

If you think that you have a hearing loss associated with noise exposure you should act quickly, even if you do not feel you need a hearing aid. If left too late (e.g. after retirement) then it may be difficult to prove that the hearing loss was caused by noise exposure alone and is not an effect of the ageing process.

War Pensions

Funding for hearing aids and for other assistive devices such as amplified telephones is available to veterans who have a hearing disability as a result of their military service, as defined by the War Pensions Act 1954 (available at public libraries).

To claim war pension funding you must complete a War Pensions Disability Application Form available from the War Pensions Services (Contact information given at the end), RSA's and other veteran support groups. You will need to include confirmation of your hearing loss from your GP or an audiologist with your application form. Once your claim has been reviewed you will be asked to see an Ear Nose and Throat specialist, to assess the degree to which your hearing loss is the result of your military service. If your claim is successful, you will then need to see an audiologist (MNZAS) who will fit your hearing aids.

The War Services unit can help you find an audiologist in your area, but it is up to you who you choose.

War Pensions funding covers the audiologist's fees, the cost of the aid itself (up to certain limits), cost of repairs, and a battery allowance. Replacement aids are also funded. Once your entitlement to War Pensions funding has been established, you may also be able to get assistance for other helpful devices, such as amplified telephones. For help to apply for these devices contact your nearest Hearing Therapist (0800 008 011)

Environmental Support Services (Enable/Accessible)

Environmental Support Services (Enable/Accessible) provide funding for hearing aids, assistive listening devices & alarm systems to people :

- who need an aid for fulltime tertiary study
- for full time employment (30 hours or over)
- job training (minimum 12 months)
- voluntary work (20 hours or over)
- or who are the primary caregiver for young children.

Your audiologist will advise you if you qualify. Your entitlement to this funding is determined by a registered assessor. However funding is limited, and even those who qualify may have to wait for some time before receiving their aids or other equipment.

WINZ

You can apply for an 'Advance Payment' of Superannuation or any other benefit through your local Work and Income NZ office to help pay for hearing aids. Up to six weeks of your entitlement can be advanced, with a maximum of \$1000 - e.g. if you receive \$100 per week, a maximum of \$600 can be advanced. This loan is repaid by a deduction from your weekly pension or benefit. The rate of repayment is at the discretion of your WINZ case officer, but is generally between \$5 and \$20 per week until the loan is cleared.

Hearing Aid Bank.

The NZ Audiological Society administers a Hearing Aid Bank for people who are financially unable to afford hearing aids and are also ineligible for other assistance.

Your audiologist (MNZAS) will help you apply if appropriate.

Contact Information

LIFE Unlimited Hearing Therapy Services

Freephone 0800 008 011

National Foundation for the Deaf

205 Parnell Rd, PO Box 37 729, Parnell
Auckland

Phone/TTY 09 307 2922 Fax 09 307 2923

Freephone 0800 867 446

Email enquiries@nfd.org.nz

Web www.nfd.org.nz

NZ Audiological Society

PO Box 9724, Newmarket Auckland

Phone 09 625 1664 Freephone 0800 625 166

Fax 09 625 1664

Email nzas@xtra.co.nz

Web www.audiology.org.nz

War Pensions Services

PO Box 9448, Hamilton

Freephone 0800 553 003

Freefax 0508 402 402