

Free Hearing Aids (Centrelink Pensioners & Veterans)

All information in this page is copied from – <http://www.health.gov.au/hear>

The Office Of Hearing Services (The Office) Is Responsible For Managing And Administering The Australian Government Hearing Services Program (The Program). The Program Provides Eligible Clients With Access To A Range Of Hearing Services.

You Are Eligible To Apply For A Hearing Services Voucher Which Entitles You To A Free Hearing Test If You Are An Australian Citizen Or Permanent Resident 21 Years Or Older And You Are:

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- Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card Holder;
 - receiving Sickness Allowance from Centrelink;
 - the holder of a Gold Repatriation Health Card issued for all conditions;
 - the holder of a White Repatriation Health Card issued for conditions that include hearing loss;
 - a dependent of a person in one of the above categories;
 - a member of the Australian Defence Force; or
 - Undergoing an Australian Government funded disability management services and you are referred by your disability employment services case manager.

(Source of information: <http://www.health.gov.au>)

Free-to-Client or Top-Up Device

What Are Free To Client Hearing Devices?

Under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the Program), if your hearing assessment shows a hearing device will assist you with your hearing and communication needs, you will be offered, in the first instance, a 'Free to Client' hearing device made by a leading manufacturer. These hearing devices are fully subsidised under the Program and are offered to you at no cost. The 'Free to Client' hearing devices are expected to help you manage your hearing needs and meet your hearing goals.

All hearing devices offered under the Program are of high quality and are reviewed routinely to ensure they are up to date with the latest available technology.

What Is A Top-Up Hearing Device?

The Program also allows for 'Top-Up' hearing devices which have additional features which may be helpful but are considered extra to those necessary to meet your hearing goals. Your hearing practitioner may offer you the option of purchasing a Top-Up hearing device. In most cases Free to Client hearing devices and Top-Up hearing devices are produced by the same manufacturers.

How Much Does A Top-Up Hearing Device Cost?

Top-Up hearing devices, due to their additional features, are only partially subsidised by the Program and if you choose a Top-Up hearing device, you will be expected to contribute towards the cost. This additional cost could be substantial and will vary depending on the hearing device you have chosen.

Purchasing a Top-Up hearing device is a matter of personal choice. When deciding whether to purchase a Top-Up hearing device you should consider your personal financial situation and weigh up how important the additional features of the Top-Up hearing device would be for you and your communication needs.

It is important to have a full understanding of all costs involved before deciding to purchase a Top-Up hearing device. You should speak with your hearing practitioner and negotiate all charges, as well as

the maintenance fee, for your Top-Up hearing device. Ensure you understand how much the Program is contributing towards your hearing device and how much you will be paying for these additional features. Make sure that the Program contribution has been deducted from the total cost of the hearing device. Obtaining a written quote for the hearing device and on-going maintenance costs is a good idea and your hearing practitioner should offer you one. If you are not sure whether the price your hearing practitioner has quoted you for your Top-Up hearing device is reasonable, you are entitled to contact other hearing clinics to compare costs of Top-Up hearing devices. Be sure that all quotes you receive include the hearing device specifications and the model details as well as the maintenance charge when comparing these prices.

How Much Will The Maintenance Agreement On A Top-Up Cost?

If you enter into a maintenance agreement for your Top-Up hearing device, you should also expect the annual maintenance fee to be higher than the fee for a free hearing device.

Do I Have To Buy A Top-Up Hearing Device?

No. All hearing devices provided under the Program are of high quality. Very good results can be achieved from the large range of Free to Client hearing devices available under the Program.

What Can I Do If I Find A Top-Up Hearing Device For A Better Price Elsewhere?

If after comparing prices of Top-Up hearing devices and you find the same hearing device is available from another hearing practitioner at a more reasonable cost, please contact the Office of Hearing Services discuss the options available to you. You may be able to transfer to a new hearing practitioner. It is important to realise this can only be done *before* you purchase your Top-Up hearing device.

Contact the Offices Client Contact line on 1800 500 726.

Can I Claim A Rebate For My Top-Up Hearing Device?

It will be worthwhile to check with your private health insurance fund, if you have one, to determine what costs they may cover for you. These costs will be different for individual health funds and the level of coverage you have.

The Commonwealth Government provides assistance to people who purchase hearing devices, if they satisfy certain taxation rules. You may be able to claim a medical expenses tax offset, which includes appliances such as hearing devices. Further advice on medical expenses tax offsets can be found by contacting the Australian Taxation Office Individual Info Line on 132 861.

What If I Am A Department Of Veterans Affairs(DVA) Client?

DVA will not cover the additional costs incurred by you if you choose to purchase a Top-Up device. DVA will however cover the costs of your Maintenance Agreement if a Free to Client hearing device is supplied. DVA will not cover the Maintenance Agreement for a Top-Up device

Alternative Listening Devices (ALDs)

Under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the Program), an eligible client with a hearing loss can be fitted free of charge with either a hearing aid or an alternative listening device (ALD) – but not both. Your hearing practitioner can help you make an informed decision about which type of hearing device will best meet your hearing and communication needs.

Types Of Hearing Devices

You may have decided to try a hearing device to manage your hearing difficulties. There are different types of hearing devices that can be used to manage hearing loss. The hearing device that will work best for you will depend on your individual hearing, communication and lifestyle needs, and may depend on the reason and severity of your hearing loss. Your hearing practitioner will consider these factors when discussing the most suitable type of hearing device with you.

Are There Different Styles Of Hearing Devices?

Under the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the Program) there are a range of high quality hearing devices available to help manage a variety of hearing needs. There are a number of devices that can help you with your listening and communication needs. Hearing devices includes not only hearing aids but also alternative listening devices.

What Are The Different Types Of Hearing Aids And Which One Will Be Best For Me?

Hearing aids come in a range of sizes, shapes and styles. Your hearing practitioner may suggest that one of the following hearing aids is suitable to help manage your hearing needs.

My Device Is No Longer Suitable, What Can I Do?

If you believe your hearing device is no longer helping you to achieve your hearing goals, make an appointment with your hearing practitioner to discuss your concerns.

Your Hearing Practitioner Will Assess And Address Your Concerns. Common Issues Include:

The hearing device needs some adjustments to make it your hearing experience comfortable in different listening environments;

The hearing device may need some maintenance and/or repairs;

Forgetting how to operate some of the hearing device features; or

Hearing device replacement on rare occasions.

You may need to have more than one appointment with your hearing practitioner to achieve your hearing goals. Your hearing practitioner will help you receive the maximum benefit from your hearing device to ensure you are not missing out on communicating with your family and friends, or participating in life to the full.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, contact the Office of Hearing Services Client Line on 1800 500 726 to discuss your concerns.