



Self Help for Hard of Hearing People



The official website for Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (Australia) Inc

1334 Pacific Highway, Turrumurra, NSW 2074
Phone (02) 9144 7586 (Voice and TTY) Fax (02) 9144 3936
Email: shhh@netspace.net.au Website: www.shhhaust.org

Information Sheets

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Information Sheet Number 8

WHAT IS A TELECOIL?

- Do you have difficulty adjusting the volume of TV or radio to a level that is comfortable for you ... and for others in the room?
- Have you ever been in some churches or public halls and noticed that other hearing aid wearers seem to manage better than you do?
- Have you ever tried to make a phone call from a public telephone on a noisy street or in an underground station ... and given up!

A hearing aid with a telecoil could solve your problems in these difficult listening situations.

SO WHAT IS A TELECOIL? (formerly called a T-Switch)

The T stands for telecoil. If the aid is equipped with a telecoil it has the capacity to pick up sound directly from the magnetic field created by feeding sound into a coil or loop of wire – an audio induction loop.

In older type aids the telecoil is activated by moving a small switch from the microphone position (M) to the T position. Hence the use of the name “T-switch”. In more modern multi-program aids the telecoil is one of the programs that can be selected by toggling through the various programs. It is often indicated by a distinctive beep.

In an induction loop system, sound from a microphone, public address system, home TV or radio – or other sound source – is fed through an amplifier and then to a loop of wire placed around the perimeter of a room or public hall. The total area or part only of the room or hall may be looped. Smaller areas, such as a bank teller’s booth or a ticket office can also be looped. An individual loop worn around the neck, or an induction plate worn next to the aid are other alternatives. The small coil in the earpiece of modern telephones also serves the same purpose.

It is important to note that a telecoil only works in association with associated electronic systems - it is of no use, for example, in direct conversation unless an appropriate assisted listening device is also involved.

When switched to the T position, the hearing aid responds only to those sounds coming through the loop. The volume of your aid may need to be increased. The microphone of the aid is not operating, so unwanted and distracting background noise is not picked up. This can often be a distinct advantage. And if the telecoil is used when answering the telephone, the distracting background noise is eliminated.

Most behind-the-ear (BTE) type aids will have this facility. Some in-the-ear (ITE) aids can also have a telecoil – in some cases this may only be accessed by use of a remote control. The telecoil in an ITE is not as powerful as that of a BTE. If you already wear an aid that does not include a telecoil it may be possible to have one added – ask your hearing aid supplier. The tiny in-the-canal (ITC) aids do not have the capacity to include a telecoil because they are too small.

WHEN WOULD I USE A TELECOIL?

People often buy an aid because they have difficulty in conversation. Buying an aid is seen as solving a one-to-one communication problem.

When that hurdle is behind you, with a new aid, you will begin to think of communication in the wider world – at the family dinner table, at work, at meetings, and at social gatherings. If you have a telecoil there are many different assistive listening devices that give extra help in these more difficult listening conditions.

If you want to continue to enjoy television or radio; if you use the telephone; if you go to church, the cinema or theatre; or if you attend social gatherings or meetings, you will appreciate the advantages a telecoil offers.

Look around you and notice the number of places that display a blue ear sign advising you that an assistive listening system is installed for your use. Frequently this is an audio loop that can only be of benefit if you have a telecoil on your hearing aid or use another device incorporating a telecoil.

It is important to tell your hearing aid provider that you understand the benefits of a telecoil and would like one incorporated in your hearing aid – this is not an additional cost.

The provider may not think it is a necessary addition, but you as the consumer know better and can insist on its inclusion given that you have an appropriate aid.

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