



Self Help for Hard of Hearing People



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## Information Sheets

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## Information Sheet Number 18

### **BLUETOOTH COMPATIBLE HEARING AIDS**

#### **What is Bluetooth?**

A telecommunications company, Ericsson in 1994, first created Bluetooth. It uses radio frequencies to allow devices such as mobile phones, televisions, a second hearing aid and iPods to communicate with each other without the use of any cables or wiring. Typically Bluetooth technology can be used over a maximum range of 10 metres. Essentially, Bluetooth creates a tiny wireless network between multiple electronic devices for multiple purposes. Initially, the two devices that want to communicate are 'paired', thus creating a secure radio link that is encrypted to prevent other devices from interfering.

## **How does a Bluetooth hearing aid work?**

When hearing aids are equipped with this wireless networking technology, they become Bluetooth hearing aids. To use Bluetooth communication with a hearing aid, there needs to be wireless capabilities built into them, it cannot be added afterwards. A small communication device usually worn around the neck on a neck loop is also required as a go-between, between the hearing aid and the other device. There are two ways to connect to other devices, one-way communication such as listening to the radio or television and two-way communication such as using a telephone. Two-way communication uses a microphone that is built in to the communication device on the neck loop.

## **How do you use a Bluetooth hearing aid?**

The procedure for 'pairing' the other Bluetooth compatible device with the hearing aid will vary depending on the manufacturer. Once the devices are 'paired' they should not need pairing again. When connected to a Bluetooth compatible phone, it will ring inside the hearing aids providing you are in range. If two hearing aids are worn, you will hear in both ears. When connected to a one way audio device, an additional Bluetooth transmitter is required to connect the other device such as a television or iPod to the hearing aid via Bluetooth.

## **What can it be used with?**

Devices that can be used with a Bluetooth compatible hearing aid providing they are also Bluetooth compatible include:

- Mobile phone
- Bluetooth home phone
- Television
- Radio
- Computer
- iPod

- Mp3 player

A Bluetooth hearing aid also has a T-switch, which enables it to be used with a loop or in locations that are equipped for hearing aid use.

### **Who is a Bluetooth hearing aid suitable for?**

Bluetooth compatible hearing aids aren't suitable for everyone. An audiologist will be able to describe the benefits of Bluetooth hearing aids for the individual and may be able to provide a demonstration of how the technology is used. Not everyone will find the Bluetooth technology valuable but many enjoy the ease of use of Bluetooth technology for their hearing aids.

### **What should I think about before I buy?**

Before purchasing a Bluetooth compatible hearing aid, talk to your audiologist to discuss whether it is a good option for you. Consider your lifestyle and what devices you would use the technology with. Keep in mind that as well as the hearing aids there are other accessories to keep track of and charge batteries for. You will also need to check that other gadgets such as television and radio have Bluetooth capabilities, as some older models may not.