



## Hearing aids – Information for workers

This information has been provided to help you understand services relating to a hearing assessment, fitting, maintenance and costs associated with hearing aids.

### **Hearing assessment**

An Audiologist or Audiometrist (your clinician) will undertake an assessment of your hearing loss.

Your clinician should ask you questions about your history and development of hearing loss, your employment history, non-work-related noise exposure, as well as your medical and family history. Your clinician will also ask whether you experience tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ears).

A hearing test should be undertaken in a soundproof room or booth. This ensures noise from sources like talking, air conditioning, phones, cars, machinery etc. does not impact your hearing test.

Your clinician will examine your ears to look for other issues which may affect your hearing, such as wax build-up or ear conditions. Your clinician will conduct tests to assess your inner and middle ear. They should also undertake a speech assessment.

If you've been exposed to loud noise, the assessment should not be undertaken for at least 16 hours after the exposure.

## Fitting your hearing aid

### Step 1: Discussing your hearing goals

Your clinician should discuss your hearing goals and needs with you, such as being able to have a conversation with your partner in a restaurant/café, or rechargeable devices if you have dexterity issues. Your clinician should also discuss the different makes and models available to ensure you are fitted with the right device to meet your hearing goals and needs.

### Step 2: Programming the hearing aid

Once a hearing aid has been selected, your clinician will use the audiogram to program the hearing aids to your hearing loss.

### Step 3: Further testing for personalisation

Your clinician should also undertake other testing to personalise the hearing aids and ensure they are programmed accurately to address your hearing needs. You should ask your clinician about these tests and how they help in improving the effectiveness of your hearing aid.

### Step 4: Using listening programs

Hearing aids can come with a range of listening programs including TV, restaurants, cars, music etc. These can be turned on or off to suit your needs and environment.

If you are unsure about how to use these listening programs, you should ask your clinician.

### Step 5: Learning to use and care for your hearing aid

Your clinician should explain how to use your hearing aids, including volume control, switching listening programs on/off and Bluetooth connectivity. They should also explain how to best care for your hearing aids to maximise their functionality and longevity.

### Step 6: Follow up appointments

You can expect a minimum of two follow-up appointments to adjust your hearing aids to ensure a correct fitting. More appointments are commonly recommended to ensure you are getting the maximum benefit from your hearing aids.

### Additional advice

We recommend you talk to your clinician about your hearing aid fit and how to get the most out of your hearing aid features.

### Troubleshooting difficulties

Difficulties with the hearing aid, e.g. not meeting your hearing needs, poor fit, finding it hard to adjust, and issues with battery replacement, should be discussed with your clinician.

If your clinician has tried to resolve the difficulties with your hearing aids without success, you can speak to your claims agent (EML or Gallagher Bassett).

## Choice of clinician

You can choose your clinician. Your choice of clinician has no impact on your claim or right to claim for the hearing services, including the cost of hearing aids. You can change to a different clinician for any reason, at any time.

Your claims agent can help with any questions you have relating to your choice of clinician.

Whilst you do not need to be legally represented to be assessed, fitted or to request approval for hearing services or hearing aid costs, you can access free legal information and guidance from SA Unions Workers' Compensation Service on 8279 2220, the Legal Services Commission on 1300 366 424 or by speaking with your union representative.

Finding a clinically certified clinician is easy – just head to [[Members - Audiology Australia](#)] or [[Member Directory - The Australian College of Audiology](#)].

## Costs and funding

You should ask your clinician about the costs you may incur for your hearing aids and how they will be funded.

You are entitled to the necessary costs, reasonably incurred for your hearing aids. Your claims agent will make this decision.

If you are unhappy with a decision relating to your hearing aids, you may be able to lodge an Application for Review with the South Australian Employment Tribunal.

## Maximum benefit and charges

The maximum benefit is \$2,020 per hearing aid. The hearing aid provider cannot charge you more than this for a hearing aid. You should contact your claims agent if you have been charged more than the maximum benefit.

## Hearing aids from other schemes

If you already have hearing aids supplied under the Hearing Services Australia Scheme or another scheme, the cost of obtaining hearing aids in the Return to Work scheme is not generally considered a necessary cost, reasonably incurred.

Costs for replacing lost or damaged hearing aids are considered on a case-by-case basis and may not be considered a reasonably incurred or necessary cost.

Your claims agent can provide you with information about replacing hearing aids relevant to your specific circumstances.

## Hearing aid lifespan

Hearing aids are expected to last a minimum of 5 years. Hearing aids that need to be repaired or replaced earlier may be covered under a manufacturer's warranty.

If you are having difficulties with your hearing aids you should contact a clinician of your choice. You do not need to see the same clinician that supplied the hearing aids.

## Repair or replacement of your hearing aid

Reasons your hearing aids may need to be repaired include:

- the hearing aid is making a whistling sound/feedback
- a component of the hearing aid is broken, damaged or faulty
- battery issues.

Reasons you may need to seek a replacement hearing aid include:

- hearing aid no longer works
- hearing aid is no longer meeting your functional needs
- you have lost or damaged your hearing aid.

### Repair or replacement under warranty

Your claims agent will help you and your clinician to determine if your hearing aid is covered by the manufacturer's warranty. It is important you report any loss or damage to your clinician as soon as possible.

Manufacturers may also offer a reduced-price hearing aid where your hearing aid has been damaged or lost in the first 12 months or needs to be replaced due to a fault occurring after the warranty has expired.

### Process for replacement

Your clinician may send a quote to your claims agent on your behalf for pre-approval of the costs of your hearing aids. Your claims agent will contact you to discuss the quote.

Once supplied and paid for, the hearing aids become your property. Care should be taken with your hearing aids to ensure they continue to work as intended.

## Your rights

When you require treatment for a work injury, you have the right to choose which individual health practitioners you receive treatment from.

Whilst an employer or ReturnToWorkSA may recommend a health practitioner to you, you have the right to choose your own treatment provider.

You have the right to privacy when you are being physically or clinically examined or treated by a health practitioner or undergoing any diagnostic examination or test.

You have the right to refuse a request from your employer or ReturnToWorkSA to be present when you are being physically or clinically examined or treated by a health practitioner, or undergoing any diagnostic examination or test.

There is no legal requirement for your employer or ReturnToWorkSA to be present whilst you are being examined or treated by a health practitioner.

## Further assistance

If you are unhappy with the service provided by a clinician or other service provider, you can contact:

- your claims agent
- ReturnToWorkSA complaints on 13 18 55 or [complaints@rtwsa.com](mailto:complaints@rtwsa.com)
- The Hearing Professional Conduct and Complaints Body (HPCCB) on 0475 245 635 or [ethicsofficer@hpccb.org.au](mailto:ethicsofficer@hpccb.org.au). Information about HPCCB can be found at <https://hpccb.org.au/>. Contact with the HPCCB can be anonymous.

If you are unhappy with the service provided by your claims agent, you can contact them to raise your concerns.

If you are dissatisfied with the response from your claims agent, you can lodge a formal complaint directly to ReturnToWorkSA complaints on 13 18 55 or by emailing [complaints@rtwsa.com](mailto:complaints@rtwsa.com).

The following organisations are good sources of information:

- SA Unions Workers' Compensation Service on 8279 2220
- the Legal Services Commission on 1300 366 424 or [www.lsc.sa.gov.au](http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au)
- your union.