Cell phones for people with hearing aids

Most cell phones sold today can be used with hearing aids and cochlear implants. Hearing Aid Compatibility (HAC) ratings make it easier to find cell phones that work with hearing aids and cochlear implants.

Newer smartphones also offer more adjustable features and settings that make cell phones more accessible.

Ask your cell phone service provider for advice and a tour of the phone’s accessibility features. Try out different models in the store.

Understanding cell phone HAC ratings

Some hearing aid and cochlear implant users notice a buzzing or whining sound, or radio interference, when using a cell phone. HAC microphone (M) and telecoil (T) ratings can tell you how well the phone reduces this interference.

- M-rating: Focus on this rating if you use your hearing aid in the microphone setting when talking on the phone.
- T-rating: Focus on this rating if you use the telecoil when talking on the phone.

Higher M and T-ratings mean there is less chance of interference between the cell phone and the hearing aid when you are using the microphone or telecoil.

- An M3 or T3 rating is considered good for use with hearing aids.
- An M4 or T4 rating is considered excellent for use with hearing aids.

Don’t rely on ratings alone. Always try out the phone before you buy it.

Adjustable settings and features

Today’s smartphones offer more accessibility features and options than ever. Your phone’s Accessibility tools allow you to choose:

- Hearing aid compatibility settings
- A vibrating alert for incoming calls
- A flashing light for incoming calls
- Customized settings for font size, color and screen backlighting.

Accessibility features are usually found in the Settings menu of your phone. Available features depend on your phone’s software. You can also search the manufacturer’s website for hearing aid compatibility or go to your service provider’s store for assistance.

Other features that people with hearing loss find useful include:

- Customizable ringer tones — different frequencies or patterns may be easier to hear
- Adjustable ringer and speaker volume
- Speaker phone.

Contact us!

mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing
dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us
800-657-3663 voice
651-964-1514 videophone
Bluetooth technology allows hearing aids and smartphones to work together. For example, Bluetooth can be used to transmit sound from a phone call directly to your hearing aid without background noise. Made for iPhone™ hearing aids connect directly to Apple products. Google is working on a similar platform for Android users. For now, Android users can purchase add-on Bluetooth devices to access this connection feature.

**Additional information**

- CTIA Access Wireless is a rich source of information on cell phones for people with disabilities: www.accesswireless.org.
- Ask your audiologist or hearing aid dispenser for cell phone recommendations that work best for your hearing aid or cochlear implant.
- Contact Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division for more resources.
ATTENTION. IF YOU NEED FREE HELP INTERPRETING THIS DOCUMENT, CALL THE ABOVE NUMBER.

For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to dhs.dhhisd@state.mn.us, call 800-657-3663, or use your preferred relay service.