



Health Care

Hearing Services – information for the veteran community

Overview

This Factsheet outlines the arrangements for hearing services for eligible members of the veteran community through the Australian Government Hearing Services Program run by the Office of Hearing Services (OHS).

What are hearing services?

Hearing services consist of hearing assessments, management and hearing rehabilitation, including the fitting of hearing devices where needed.

Who is eligible?

If you have a Repatriation Health Card – For all conditions (Gold Card), the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) will fund hearing services that meet your clinical needs, if these services are provided under DVA arrangements. For information about eligibility and use of the Gold Card, please see DVA Factsheets *HSV59* and *HSV60*.

If you have a Repatriation Health Card - For specific conditions (White Card), DVA will fund hearing services provided under DVA arrangements, if they are necessary to meet a clinical need that is associated with an accepted disability or the effects of malignant cancer.

If you have a Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) or are a Dependant of an eligible veteran, you can also access the Australian Government Hearing Services Program at no cost. However, DVA does not pay the annual maintenance fee for any hearing aids that are provided under this arrangement.

How do I access hearing services?

Your Local Medical Officer (LMO) refers you to the OHS for assessment. The OHS issues eligible beneficiaries with a voucher to obtain hearing services as well as a Directory of Service Providers.

The Directory of Service Providers contains more than 200 accredited providers who will accept the voucher and provide a hearing assessment free of charge. If clinically necessary, you can be provided with a hearing aid from the 'free to client' range that meets your clinical need, as well as any support required to operate the hearing aid. DVA pays for the annual maintenance and batteries associated with these hearing aids for all Gold Card holders, and for those White Card holders who have an accepted disability associated with hearing loss or the effects of malignant cancer.

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Audiologist

DVA has a consultant audiologist to assist entitled persons with complex hearing issues. If you have any concerns regarding your hearing requirements you should call 1800 637 816.

Free of charge hearing aids are provided to meet your clinical need

There is an extensive range of high quality hearing aids with many features to meet clinical need. These hearing aids are known as the 'free to client' range. This wide range of high quality digital aids include both in the ear and behind the ear styles, which will generally meet the clinical needs of most entitled persons.

Clinical need

Clinical need for hearing is identified from a thorough comprehensive assessment of your hearing. It takes into account:

- hearing test results (severity and configuration of loss);
- the nature and extent of communication difficulties and usual environments;
- the shape, size and health of ears;
- physical co-ordination;
- other physical conditions eg. blindness, mental and physical ability to manage different device styles; and
- capabilities of proven hearing aid technology.

Clinical hearing need shapes your individual rehabilitation plan. This plan incorporates a set of realistic goals negotiated with you, as well as appropriate advice and counselling. Such plans also include the prescription, selection and fitting of suitable hearing devices if required. This rehabilitation package aims to provide a quality hearing outcome.

Special requirements

If you have a special clinical requirement, your hearing services provider can liaise with the OHS to discuss an alternative free device that meets this requirement.

Top up hearing aids

'Top-up' hearing aids have additional features that are not *essential* to meet clinical needs. You may choose to be fitted with a top-up hearing aid that offers these additional features, but you are under no obligation to your hearing service provider to do so. If you do choose a hearing aid from the 'top up' range, it will be a matter of negotiation between you and your hearing service provider. You will be required to *pay the difference* between DVA's contribution for a hearing aid that is considered suitable to meet your clinical need and the provider's retail price. The provision of the top-up device will then become a private arrangement between you and your provider.

You will also be required to pay an annual co-payment towards the cost of maintenance and batteries associated with this hearing aid. DVA does not refund these co-payments.

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In summary

You do not have to pay for a hearing aid that is assessed as meeting your clinical need.

If you choose a “top up” hearing aid with additional features that are above and beyond what is required to meet your clinical need, you will be required to make a co-payment for this hearing aid and its maintenance.

If you are unhappy or uncomfortable with the outcome of a visit to a hearing aid provider, please contact the consultant audiologist at OHS on 1800 637 816.

Veterans and their services provider

It is important that you liaise closely with your hearing services providers at all times in order to ensure the hearing aids provided meet your clinical need. If you are dissatisfied, or are experiencing difficulties with your hearing aid, please discuss your concerns with your hearing services provider.

Tinnitus

If you have concerns about either tinnitus or hearing loss, please discuss these concerns with your OHS hearing services provider.

A tinnitus masker may only be prescribed to entitled persons by a doctor or an audiologist and is provided under DVA's *Rehabilitation Appliances Program*. Where necessary, the doctor and the audiologist may refer you for tinnitus management.

Other Factsheets related to this topic include:

There are specific DVA Factsheets on a wide range of information. They are available from any DVA office or the DVA website at <http://factsheets.dva.gov.au/factsheets/>.

Examples include:

- *Repatriation Health Card – For All Conditions (Gold): HSV60*
- *Repatriation Health Card – For Specific Conditions (White): HSV61*
- *Commonwealth and Other Allied Veterans: HSV62*

Disclaimer

The information contained in this Factsheet is general in nature and does not take into account individual circumstances. You should not make important decisions, such as those that affect your financial or lifestyle position, on the basis of information contained in this Factsheet. Where you are required to lodge a written claim for a benefit, you must take full responsibility for your decisions prior to the written claim being determined. You should seek confirmation in writing of any oral advice you receive from DVA.

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More information

You can phone DVA for the cost of a local call on 133 254 or 1800 555 254 for country callers. Use a normal landline phone if you can. Mobile phone calls may cost you more.

You can visit the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au or send an email to DVA at: generalenquiries@dva.gov.au. You can also get more help from any DVA office.

You can also contact OHS about hearing aids on free call number **1800 500 726**. Users of TTY equipment should call **1800 500 496**.