



## **TELEPHONE TACTICS**

Most people with hearing loss – including those with profound hearing loss- are able to communicate by phone. A range of assistive listening devices can be used with or without hearing aids to improve your ability to hear both the phone ring and the incoming voice. Accommodation can be made for phones used on the job as well as in the house.

### **IF YOU DO NOT WEAR HEARING AIDS:**

Volume Control phones can be obtained from various suppliers to allow you to amplify the incoming voice.

A small pocket-sized portable telephone amplifier or coupler which attaches to the phone earpiece by means of an elastic strap can also be used. There are a number of brands, all battery-powered.

If these do not give enough amplification for you to understand incoming phone calls, you should consider having a full hearing assessment – you may need to wear a hearing aid.

### **IF YOU DO WEAR HEARING AIDS WHICH DO NOT HAVE A T-SWITCH:**

When using the phone while using a behind-the-ear hearing aid, the earpiece of the phone should be held high so it is as close to the microphone as possible – usually near the top of the hearing aid. If the signal is still not loud enough, a Volume Control phone can also be used. Again the earpiece of the phone should be held close to the microphone of the aid.

Where an in-the-ear aid or the in-the-canal aid is worn, any attempt to use the phone with the aid in position may produce whistling (feedback). A small pad of foam, about 8mm thick, placed between the earpiece and the ear may reduce feedback or hold the phone slightly away from the hearing aid.

### **IF YOU DO WEAR HEARING AIDS WITH A T-SWITCH:**

When switched to the T Position, the aid only responds to electro-magnetic signals through an induction coil. Because the microphone is not operating, background noise is not picked up. Most Telstra phone for home use- and most public phones – now have an inbuilt induction coil. Optus OneTouch phones do not have inbuilt induction coils for use with hearing aids with T-Switches.

Using phones with an induction coil should enable you to hear a clear incoming signal by switching your aid to the T position. You may find that you also need to increase the hearing aid volume. The earpiece of the phone should be moved about to find the position giving

the best signal – usually when held near the top and slightly behind the aid. Note that not all telephones from other manufacturers have an inbuilt induction coil – you should enquire before making a purchase. When buying a cordless phone, ask for one with a coil or hearing aid compatibility. Many hearing impaired people find it harder to hear over a cordless phone.

For more volume, a Volume Control phone can also be used.

## **EQUIPMENT PROVIDERS:**

**Telstra** – you must be a Telstra customer to be eligible to receive special assistive telephone and communication equipment and alerting devices under normal Telstra services to residential user. Contact the free Telstra Disability Equipment Hotline on 1800 068 424 (Voice) or 1800 808 981 (TTY) to discuss eligibility and to receive an application form. Certification of impairment will be required with the equipment delivered directly to the customer. Maintenance of such equipment is available under this program

Some of the special Telstra devices, which may help and about which you should enquire are:

- **Extension Ringers, which** provide variable volume, tone/pitch and rate of ring. You can select the tone, which you hear easily and maximum volume should be loud enough for most users.
- **Visual Signals** connect to the phone socket and to a 240 Volt Outlet. A lamp can be plugged into the unit and the flashing light indicates that the phone is ringing. Each of these devices is supplied with a plug for connection to the phone socket. A telephone double adaptor is required so that the phone and alerting devices can be used with the one socket. The householder can do this and no special installation is required.

**Optus** has two OneTouch handsets available with variable ringer volume controls. Optus also has a TTY service available in the Long Distance Call Division.

There are many other phones suppliers and services currently selling phones, which may or may not be suitable for hearing impaired users. It is essential that you identify your needs before purchase – inbuilt induction coil, volume control, ringer volume control. If possible, try the phone in your own home before buying. These suppliers may also have accessories available such as Extension Ringers, Visual Signals – ask before you purchase.

Digital mobile phones may cause interference with hearing aids. Some manufacturers provide a compatible hands-free accessory to enable the phone to be placed at least a metre away from the hearing aid to reduce this interference. Unfortunately many retailers do not understand the special need of hearing impaired customers. Make sure you tell the retailer that you do wear a hearing aid and insist on trying out any model you are

considering before completing the purchase. Always ask whether the phone you are interested in can be used with a T-Switch. The CDMA alternative to digital phones is considered to cause less interference than digital phones and may be worth considering. Mobile phones technology is changing all the time. It is worth contacting the Hearing Matters Australia Office for the latest details.

### **SOME GENERAL PHONE TIPS:**

- When using the phone, tell the caller that you have a hearing problem and ask them to speak more slowly. This will reduce stress for you.
- When only a part of a sentence has been understood, it is helpful to the caller if you repeat the part you heard and then ask for clarification.
- Always confirm important points such as meeting places and times by repeating the arrangements, as you have understood them. The caller can then confirm or correct.