

# COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT WORKSAFEBC'S HEARING AID PROGRAM

**WORK SAFE BC**

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Through its Hearing Aid Program, WorkSafeBC (the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C.) provides hearing aids to workers who have accepted claims for work-related hearing loss and may find hearing aids beneficial.

Here are answers to questions often asked by clients in the Hearing Aid Program.

## BENEFITS

### Does WorkSafeBC provide hearing aids to everyone whose hearing loss claim is accepted?

No. The degree of disability determines whether or not WorkSafeBC will approve hearing aids. The authority to provide medical aid, such as hearing aids, is found in the *Workers Compensation Act*, Section 21(1): WorkSafeBC "may furnish or provide for the injured worker any medical . . . care or treatment . . . that it may consider *reasonably necessary*."

### If I decide not to get hearing aids now, can I change my mind later?

Yes. If you're eligible for hearing aids now but decide not to get them for any personal reason, you're still eligible to receive them in the future.

### What benefits am I entitled to receive from the WorkSafeBC Hearing Aid Program?

If your claim is accepted and you're approved for hearing aids, you're also eligible for batteries and hearing aid repairs. However, WorkSafeBC pays for the repair and maintenance of only one set of hearing aids.

### Once WorkSafeBC has approved the need for hearing aid(s), do I have to pay for them and wait for WorkSafeBC to reimburse me?

No. The service provider will bill WorkSafeBC directly.

### Are all hearing aids covered under the Hearing Aid Program?

No. While a wide variety of hearing aids are fully covered, there is a maximum price limit and some hearing aids may exceed this. It's up to you and your service provider to determine which hearing aid best satisfies your needs. If you're interested in hearing aids that are not fully covered by the Hearing Aid Program, please discuss this with your service provider.

### What items are not covered by the Hearing Aid Program?

- TV, radio, amplification devices, closed-caption decoders, battery chargers, and battery testers
- Hearing protection for work – your employer must provide this
- Medical treatment for your ears, such as wax removal

## GOING TO THE HEARING AID CLINIC

### Once my claim has been accepted, which hearing aid clinic should I go to?

You should go to the authorized clinic closest to your home. Refer to the list of authorized clinics you received when you were notified that your claim was accepted.

### What should I tell them when I first go to the hearing aid clinic?

Show the service provider your letter from WorkSafeBC to make sure they know that you're a WorkSafeBC client with an accepted claim. If you've been fitted with hearing aids by another clinic, inform the service provider about the age and repair history of those hearing aids. If you've been tested at WorkSafeBC, take the results of your hearing test.

### How often should I go to the hearing aid clinic?

Typically, two to four times during the fitting period:

- For ear impressions and any further tests that your service provider may need to order your hearing aids
- To fit your hearing aids
- For a checkup
- To either accept or return your hearing aids at the end of your adjustment period

After the fitting period is over, you're encouraged to contact the clinic with any concerns about your hearing aids at any time.

### What about mileage costs?

If you must travel more than 48 km round trip to the closest clinic, you will be reimbursed for the distance in excess of 48 km.

### If another hearing aid clinic opens closer to my home, do I have to change service providers?

No. You don't have to change clinics unless you want to.

If you change clinics, please ask your service provider for a copy of your file. Take your file to the new clinic so they have all the information about the hearing aids you wear.

According to WorkSafeBC's agreement with service providers and warranties with hearing aid manufacturers, WorkSafeBC has prepaid for service to your hearing aids for one year. Therefore, it is more efficient and cost-effective if you obtain service from the clinic where you received your hearing aids.

## CHOOSING A HEARING AID

### What are the advantages and limitations of a hearing aid?

Hearing aids do not replace normal hearing, but should give you substantially improved speech understanding in quiet backgrounds (one-to-one, watching TV), and somewhat improved speech understanding in background noise (restaurants, group conversation). They should make listening less tiring, but may make background sounds (paper rustling, refrigerator running) sharper and more distracting. Your own voice may sound different to you.

This is true for all styles of hearing aids.

### What's the best type of hearing aid?

There is no one superior hearing aid or hearing aid company. The best choice for you depends on many factors, such as your hearing loss, the shape of your ear, your communication needs, and your lifestyle.

### Should I return the hearing aids if I don't like them?

You have a 60-day fitting-adjustment period to decide how helpful the hearing aids are. The adjustment period is for your benefit so that you can make an informed decision. Take advantage of this time by using the hearing aids and discussing any problems with your service provider – adjustments can be made. You will be asked to sign an acceptance form at the end of the fitting period. If you decide not to use the hearing aids, you should return them. This won't affect your future eligibility for hearing aids.

### Should I get one or two hearing aids?

This depends on your hearing. If you have hearing loss in both ears, you would likely benefit from a hearing aid in each ear.

### Is a smaller hearing aid better?

Not necessarily. There are advantages and disadvantages to all styles of hearing aids. Your service provider can discuss these with you.

### Is a more expensive hearing aid better?

Not necessarily. Some hearing aid components may result in a more expensive hearing aid. The benefit of any one of these components depends on many factors and may vary from person to person.

## BATTERIES

### How long do batteries last?

Battery life depends on the size of batteries, the volume setting, and how long you wear the hearing aid.

### Battery life guide

Battery Size	Days of Life
10	5 to 7 days
312	6 to 13 days
13	10 to 16 days
675	16 to 30 days

### How many batteries should I get at one time?

A three- to six-month supply is reasonable. This ensures that you have fresh batteries available when you need them.

## REPLACING HEARING AIDS

### Can my hearing aids be adjusted if my hearing changes?

Usually. Hearing aids have many internal adjustments. Often your aids can be reset by the service provider or manufacturer to match a change in your hearing.

### How often should my hearing aids be replaced?

Hearing aids are replaced only when necessary. If your service provider determines that your hearing aid can no longer be repaired or adjusted, then replacement may be necessary.

If you receive a replacement pair of hearing aids, you may discard, donate, or keep your old pair. However, WorkSafeBC will maintain and repair only *one* pair of hearing aids, that is, the most recent pair.

### What happens if my hearing aids are lost or stolen?

WorkSafeBC isn't responsible for replacing lost or stolen hearing aids, or those damaged by causes beyond normal wear and tear. However, each case is reviewed on an individual basis. Send WorkSafeBC Hearing Loss Claims Section a letter outlining the circumstances under which your hearing aids were lost, stolen, or damaged. To minimize replacement costs, consider covering your hearing aids on your household insurance policy.

## SAFETY ON THE JOB

### Can I wear my hearing aids at work?

If you don't work in hazardous noise you can wear your aids. If you do work in hazardous noise, hearing protection should be worn instead of a hearing aid. Hearing aids aren't designed to act as hearing protection and don't provide enough sound reduction to protect hearing, even when they're turned off. There are many specialized hearing protectors for workers who have trouble hearing in noisy workplaces. If you have any questions about hearing protection, contact the WorkSafeBC Hearing Loss Prevention Section (see below for contact information).

## MY RESPONSIBILITIES

### Can you summarize my responsibilities in a few words?

- Have realistic expectations about what hearing aids can and cannot do.
- Accept that you may still have problems hearing in background noise even with excellent hearing aids.
- Visit the service provider during the 60-day adjustment period.
- Follow appropriate care and maintenance instructions for the hearing aids.
- Contact the service provider as soon as possible if a problem arises with the hearing aids.
- Investigate the possibility of putting your hearing aids on your household insurance policy.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For general questions about your hearing aids:

### Call Centre

604 231-8888 or toll-free 1 888 967-5377

For complaints about your hearing aid fitting services:

### WorkSafeBC Health Care Services

604 232-7787 or toll-free 1 866 244-6404, ext. 7787

Or

### Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Consultants

1515 Blanshard Street, Victoria BC V8W 3C8

Phone 250 952-1502

This board was set up under the *Hearing Aid Act of British Columbia* to license and regulate the practice of private hearing aid dispensers in B.C.

For questions or concerns about your hearing protection needs at work:

### WorkSafeBC Hearing Loss Prevention

604 276-3090 or toll-free 1 888 621-7233, ext. 3090

WorkSafeBC has a variety of other materials on noise and hearing loss prevention available through [WorkSafeBC.com](http://WorkSafeBC.com).

