

Choosing the Right Hearing Aid

An Independent Guide for Northern Beaches Residents

Choosing a hearing aid can feel overwhelming. With so many models, features, and price points available, where do you even begin? At The Audiology Place, we believe the best hearing aid for you depends on your unique situation—your hearing loss level, lifestyle, budget, technology preferences, and personal goals.

As an independent audiology clinic, we're not tied to any manufacturer. This means we can recommend devices based purely on what's right for you—not what earns us the biggest commission. Dr Signe Steers and our team have access to all major brands and can help you navigate your options with complete transparency.

This guide walks you through key questions to consider and provides recommendations tailored to different needs. We'll also explain how the Australian Government's Hearing Services Program can help eligible people access subsidised hearing aids.

Key Questions to Ask Yourself

Before diving into models and features, start by reflecting on your needs and preferences:

1. **How severe is your hearing loss?** Is it a mild loss or a profound loss requiring powerful amplification?
2. **What's your lifestyle like?** Are you socially active—dining out, attending events, working in busy environments? Or do you spend most time at home in quieter settings?
3. **Is budget a key factor?** Are you looking for the most cost-effective option, or are you prepared to invest in premium features?
4. **What phone do you use?** Do you want your hearing aids to connect directly to your iPhone or Android device?

Your answers to these questions will help guide us toward the most suitable options. Let's explore each factor in detail.

Hearing Loss Severity: Mild vs. Profound

The degree of your hearing loss is one of the most important factors in choosing a hearing aid. When you visit The Audiology Place, we use advanced diagnostic tools—including extended high-frequency testing and tympanometry—to get a complete picture of your hearing health.

Mild to Moderate Hearing Loss

With milder losses, you have more flexibility in terms of size and style. Discreet designs like Receiver-in-Canal (RIC) or In-the-Ear (ITE) aids can usually provide sufficient amplification. These smaller devices are often chosen by Northern Beaches residents who want something inconspicuous for work, the beach, or social settings.

Example models: Oticon Intent, Phonak Audéo Sphere, Widex SmartRIC, ReSound Nexia—all known for natural sound quality and suitability for milder losses.

Severe to Profound Hearing Loss

For very poor hearing, powerful amplification is essential. "Power" or "Super Power" hearing aids—usually Behind-the-Ear (BTE) style with a custom earmold—deliver the high gain required without distortion. These devices are slightly larger to house stronger amplifiers and bigger batteries, but they're built to serve you well in all situations.

Very small completely-in-canal aids won't work for profound loss—they simply can't provide enough power and may cause feedback.

Example models: Phonak Naída Lumity, Oticon Xceed, Signia Motion Charge&Go, ReSound Enzo—all engineered for severe-to-profound losses with features to manage feedback and noise.

Our recommendation: Always have your hearing tested by a qualified audiologist—not just a hearing aid dispenser—to determine your exact loss level. If your loss is borderline, we can help you decide whether a smaller aid will work or whether you'd benefit from a power BTE. In some cases of profound loss, cochlear implants may be worth exploring.

Lifestyle Considerations: Active vs. Home-Based

Your typical listening environments should influence the technology level you choose.

Socially Active Lifestyle

If you frequently attend social gatherings at Forestville RSL, catch up with friends at Manly, or work in busy environments, consider a premium hearing aid with advanced noise reduction and directional microphones. High-end models can automatically adjust to different sound environments and focus on speech in noise—making conversation easier at busy cafés, family gatherings, or Northern Beaches restaurants.

Premium aids often include wind noise reduction (great for coastal walks), rechargeable batteries (no fumbling with tiny batteries), and robust moisture protection for our humid climate.

Mostly Home-Based Lifestyle

If you spend most of your time at home or in one-on-one conversations, you may not need all the bells and whistles. Basic or mid-range hearing aids can provide excellent performance for daily communication without the premium price tag. They still offer good sound quality and basic noise reduction for watching TV or chatting with family.

Many fully subsidised hearing aids under the Hearing Services Program can meet the needs of people who aren't frequently in loud environments.

Somewhere In Between

Most of our Northern Beaches clients fall somewhere in between—quiet at home during the week, but active on weekends. If you occasionally face noisy settings, a mid-level device that balances cost and performance might be ideal. We can also set you up with accessories like remote microphones to help a basic hearing aid perform better in challenging situations.

Be sure to describe specific situations where you struggle to hear—office meetings, dinner with friends, watching TV, grandchildren's activities. This helps us choose and program a hearing aid that works best for your actual daily life.

Budget: Entry-Level vs. Premium

Cost is a major consideration for most people. In Australia, hearing aids can range from roughly \$1,500 to \$4,000 per device for mid-range models, up to \$6,000 or more per device for top-tier technology. The good news is that the Hearing Services Program provides fully subsidised options for eligible Australians.

Budget-Conscious Options

If price is a key factor, take full advantage of the HSP subsidy if you qualify. Pensioners and other eligible adults can receive fully subsidised hearing aids at no cost. These devices meet government quality standards and provide excellent day-to-day performance. They might not include direct smartphone streaming or the latest AI features without a co-payment, but they cover the essentials for better hearing.

At The Audiology Place, we're happy to help you navigate your options—without any pressure to upgrade. Because we're independent, we don't have sales targets to meet.

Premium Options

If you have more flexibility in your budget, you can explore premium models with the latest technology: automatic scene analysis, advanced noise filtering, feedback suppression, Bluetooth connectivity, rechargeability, and in some cases health-tracking features like fall detection.

Even if you're eligible for HSP, you can choose a premium aid and pay the difference—the government covers the cost of a basic device and you pay the gap for the upgrade.

Comparison at a Glance

Category	Features and Options
Budget-Friendly	Essential features for clear hearing in quiet and moderate settings. Meets government quality standards. Includes basic noise reduction and automatic volume control. <i>Cost: \$0 for eligible HSP clients.</i>
Premium	Full suite of features: adaptive directionality, strong noise reduction for crowds, feedback cancellation, Bluetooth streaming, rechargeable batteries, smartphone apps, AI-powered processing. <i>Cost: \$1,500–\$6,000+ per device (partially subsidised for HSP eligible).</i>

A note on older-generation models: If you're not eligible for government assistance and budget is tight, ask us about previous-generation models sold at a discount. They often share technology with last year's flagship at a better price.

Smartphone Compatibility: iPhone or Android?

Modern hearing aids can double as wireless headsets, streaming phone calls and music directly to your ears. But compatibility varies by phone type.

iPhone Users

Many hearing aids are labelled "Made for iPhone" (MFi), meaning they connect directly to Apple devices with no extra accessories. You can stream calls, music, and other audio straight to your ears and control the aids via iOS settings.

MFi examples: Oticon Intent/Real, ReSound Nexia/Omnia, Starkey Genesis AI, Signia Pure AX—essentially most current models from major brands.

Android Users

The industry has made great strides in Android compatibility. Some brands use Bluetooth Classic connectivity, which allows streaming from any Bluetooth-enabled phone. Phonak is particularly strong here—their Audéo and Naída models use universal Bluetooth and work seamlessly with Android, iPhone, or even basic flip phones.

Other manufacturers support Android ASHA (Audio Streaming for Hearing Aids), which enables direct streaming on Android 10+ with compatible phone models.

Android-friendly examples: Phonak Lumity/Sphere series stream to Android without accessories. ReSound, Signia, Oticon, and Starkey all offer ASHA support in recent generations.

No Smartphone or Simple Phone

If you don't use a mobile device much, you might not need Bluetooth at all—and could save money with a simpler model. We can ensure your aid has a telecoil for use with landline phones or loop systems. Even non-tech users sometimes enjoy Bluetooth TV streamers to hear the television better.

Children's Hearing Aids

When selecting hearing aids for a child, there are additional factors to keep in mind.

Eligibility and Access

In Australia, children and young adults under 26 with hearing loss are covered under the HSP Community Service Obligation (CSO) program. This means they can receive free hearing aids and services through Hearing Australia. If your child is diagnosed with hearing loss, they'll likely be referred to Hearing Australia, which specialises in paediatric audiology.

At The Audiology Place, we can help with initial assessments and ongoing support, working alongside Hearing Australia to ensure your child gets the best care.

Paediatric Features

Children's hearing aids are typically BTE style with custom earmolds—this allows for growth (earmolds can be replaced cheaply as your child grows) and provides secure fitting for all degrees of loss. Paediatric models have special features like tamper-proof battery doors, LED indicators so parents and teachers can see the device is working, and compatibility with FM systems used in classrooms.

Example models: Phonak Sky Lumity, Oticon Xceed Play, ReSound Up Smart—all designed specifically for children covering mild through profound loss.

Australian Government Hearing Services Program

The Hearing Services Program (HSP) is a government initiative providing subsidised hearing aids and audiological services to eligible Australians. As an accredited HSP provider, The Audiology Place can help you access these benefits.

Who is Eligible?

You're likely eligible for the voucher scheme if you're an Australian citizen or permanent resident aged 21 or older and hold a Pensioner Concession Card, DVA Gold Card, DVA

White Card (for hearing), or are a dependent of an eligible person. Australian Defence Force members are also eligible.

Under the CSO component, all Australians under 26 with hearing loss qualify, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50.

What Does HSP Provide?

- Free comprehensive hearing test
- Fully subsidised hearing aids from a range of major brands
- Option to "top up" for premium models (government pays base cost, you pay the difference)
- Low-cost maintenance program (around \$45/year) covering batteries and repairs
- New aids typically every 5 years, or sooner if your hearing changes significantly

How to Access HSP at The Audiology Place

The process is straightforward. Check your eligibility (we can help with this), book a hearing assessment with us, and if you qualify, we'll fit you with hearing aids subsidised by the program. We'll show you how to use and maintain them, and provide ongoing support right here on the Northern Beaches.

Popular Brands We Work With

Because we're independent, we have access to all major global hearing aid brands. Here's a brief overview of what each offers:

Phonak

Swiss brand known for robust technology and universal Bluetooth connectivity. The Audéo Lumity/Sphere is excellent for mild-to-severe loss with natural sound and seamless Android streaming. The Naída Lumity provides super power for profound loss. Phonak's universal Bluetooth is particularly appreciated by Android users.

Oticon

Danish brand focused on "BrainHearing" philosophy—helping your brain make sense of sound. The Intent/Real series uses deep neural networks for natural sound processing. The Xceed provides ultra-power for profound loss. Known for an open, natural sound approach.

Signia

German-engineered with a wide range from basic to luxury. The Pure Charge&Go AX is a rechargeable option with motion sensors that adjust sound as you move. Their "Own Voice Processing" makes your own voice sound more natural—something many hearing aid wearers appreciate.

Starkey

American company known for integrating health features. The Genesis AI offers excellent sound quality plus health tracking, step counting, and fall detection. Premium-priced but very feature-rich—popular with tech-savvy clients.

ReSound

Danish brand that pioneered Made-for-iPhone hearing aids. The Nexia/Omnia series features a third microphone in the ear for more natural spatial cues. Excellent for hearing speech in noisy environments like busy Northern Beaches cafés.

Widex

Danish brand known for natural sound and tinnitus relief. The SmartRIC/Moment series has minimal sound delay, often praised by musicians and audiophiles.

Recommended Models by Need

Hearing Loss / Need	Example Models
Mild to Moderate (Adult)	Oticon Intent, Phonak Audéo Sphere, Widex SmartRIC, ReSound Nexia—clear sound for milder losses, available in discreet RIC or custom styles
Severe to Profound (Adult)	Oticon Xceed, Phonak Naída Lumity, Signia Motion, ReSound Enzo—powerful BTE models with feedback management and noise reduction
Paediatric (Children)	Phonak Sky Lumity, Oticon Xceed Play, ReSound Up Smart—sturdy BTEs with child-safe features and FM system compatibility

Key Takeaways

1. **Match the aid to your hearing loss.** Mild losses can use smaller, discreet aids, while severe losses need powerful BTE devices. Don't under-power a profound loss—you'll be disappointed with the result.
2. **Consider your daily environments.** If you often struggle with background noise at Northern Beaches venues, invest in a device with advanced noise management. If you live quietly, a basic device might be perfectly sufficient.
3. **Use available subsidies.** Pensioners, veterans, and children have access to free or subsidised hearing aids through the HSP. Take advantage of this program to reduce out-of-pocket costs—you can always top up for premium features if desired.
4. **Think about connectivity.** Decide if streaming calls and music is important to you. Choose an aid compatible with your smartphone—MFi for Apple, or a suitable Bluetooth option for Android.
5. **For children, act early.** Work with paediatric-focused services. Kids should be fitted as early as possible—even babies can wear hearing aids, which is crucial for speech development.
6. **Choose an independent audiologist.** Ask any hearing provider: "Do you receive incentives from hearing aid manufacturers?" At The Audiology Place, our answer is no. We recommend based on what's right for you.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

At The Audiology Place in Forestville, Dr Signe Steers and our team will guide you through a comprehensive hearing assessment, discuss these factors, and let you trial hearing aids. We offer an adjustment period to make sure the chosen devices truly meet your needs.

With the right device, properly fitted by an independent audiologist, you'll be able to enjoy clearer conversations, reconnect with loved ones, and live life to the fullest with better hearing.

Book your appointment today: theaudiologyplace.com.au | Phone: (02) XXXX XXXX

Sources

This guide draws on information from the following sources:

- Australian Government Department of Health – Hearing Services Program (health.gov.au)
- Healthy Hearing (healthyhearing.com) – Hearing aid selection guidance
- Amplifon Australia (amplifon.com) – HSP information and hearing aid pricing
- Ear and Hearing Australia (earandhearing.com.au) – Model comparisons and features
- HearUp USA (hearupusa.com) – Hearing aid model recommendations
- Senior Living (seniorliving.org) – Smartphone compatibility and health features
- Oticon (oticon.com) – Paediatric hearing aid specifications
- Hearing Aid UK (hearingaid.org.uk) – Power hearing aid comparisons

Information current as of 2025. Individual recommendations may vary based on your specific hearing needs and circumstances.