

**Try before you buy.** It's best to try several phones before making your purchase to find the best match with your hearing aid.

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**Q. Can I return the phone if it does not work for me after purchase?**

A. Be sure to understand the return policy and early termination fees before signing up for any cell phone or service. Since a cell phone's performance with your hearing aid can change depending on your location, your listening experience outside the store may be different.

**Q. Do the FCC HAC regulations guarantee that I will be able to use a cell phone with my hearing aid?**

A. While there is no guarantee, phones that comply with Hearing Aid Compatibility (HAC) regulations should improve usability for hearing aid users. Hearing loss and hearing aids are highly individualized so it is still advisable to try a cell phone with your hearing aid in the store before making your cell phone purchase.

**Q. How do I know if my hearing aids will work with my cell phone?**

A. Most new hearing aids contain RF immune circuitry and about half contain a telecoil. These digital hearing aids are designed to be usable with wireless devices with lower RF emissions and magnetic coupling ability. Your hearing healthcare professional will be able to tell you if your hearing aid is immune to RF interference and may need to contact the manufacturer of your hearing aid to determine its immunity rating. Your hearing healthcare professional will also be able to tell you if your hearing aid contains a telecoil.

**Q. What if I cannot find a cell phone that works with my hearing aid?**

A. You can check with your hearing healthcare professional to determine if there is a hearing aid option for you that may work better with cell phones. Some users may find that accessories such as neckloops may further assist with their use of HAC-rated wireless devices and for using non-rated cell phones.

## Resources for Consumers

Many people and organizations contribute to ensuring accessible communication is equally available for all individuals with disabilities, including consumers who have a hearing loss.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.accesswireless.org>

"Catch the Wireless Wave" is courtesy of the ATIS Hearing Aid Compatibility Incubator and CTIA- The Wireless Association™.

# CATCH THE WIRELESS WAVE



## Hearing Aid Compatibility with Wireless Phones and Services



[www.accesswireless.org](http://www.accesswireless.org)

The Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") has approved standards and passed regulations for digital wireless device use with hearing aids. In 2001, the FCC modified the exemption for wireless phones under the Hearing Aid Compatibility (HAC) Act of 1988 in light of the rising number of wireless calls to emergency services and the growing trend among wireless carriers to move away from analog services in favor of more efficient and feature-rich digital services. The FCC's HAC requirements for wireless devices include rating and labeling phones for RF emissions for use with hearing aids in the microphone mode and magnetic coupling ability for use with hearing aids in the telecoil mode.

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**Q. What wireless devices are covered in the HAC requirements?**

A. The FCC's HAC requirements include devices used in digital "commercial mobile radio services," more commonly referred to as cellular phone service or wireless phone services. These devices include digital cell phones, mobile phones, and handheld PC's and PDA's that include telephone functionality. Throughout this brochure, all of these types of phones are called wireless devices, cell phones, or phones.

**Q. When will hearing aid compatible cell phones be available?**

A. The FCC required that nationwide carriers offer a range of phones that comply with HAC regulations for rating and labeling for microphone mode (RF interference) as of September 2005 and for telecoil mode (magnetic coupling) as of September 2006. Many regional carriers also offer phones and support.

**Q. Who manufactures wireless devices that have been approved by the FCC?**

A. All major handset manufacturers are required to offer HAC-compliant devices and may also offer hands-free accessories to improve usability.

**Q. How will I know if a phone is HAC-compliant?**

A. HAC-compliant device packages are marked with "M" or "T" ratings to reflect how the wireless device will work with the hearing aid in microphone mode ("M") and in telecoil mode ("T"). Only phones that are tested and meet the minimum rating for HAC, "M3" or "T3," and higher will be labeled. If you see an "M3," "M4," "T3" or "T4" on the box, then the phone has been designated as HAC-compliant. Information about phones that are rated for HAC also will be shown on the display card by the phone in service provider operated retail stores and in the product's manual or packaging insert. If you have questions about the rating of a wireless device or service, ask your service provider or device manufacturer for more information. The higher the "M" rating on the phone, the more likely it is you will be able to use the phone with your hearing aid on the microphone setting. The higher the "T" rating, the more likely you will be able to use the phone with your hearing aid on the telecoil setting.

**Q. Do HAC-compliant cell phones look any different from other cell phones?**

A. No.

**Q. Are HAC-compliant phones more expensive than phones without hearing aid compatibility?**

A. No. The range of features and functions of cell phones will impact the price, but hearing aid compatibility will not. Service provider owned and operated stores will offer a range of phones with varying features and prices.

**Q. Are there phones I can use with my hearing aid on the microphone setting?**

A. As of September 2005, FCC regulations have required that nationwide manufacturers and service providers make available cell phones for use with hearing aids on the microphone setting. These phones have reduced RF interference. Phones that have been tested for microphone mode and are HAC-compliant will be labeled on the box with ratings of "M3" or "M4." There are also phones on the market that work with hearing aids in the microphone setting but they may not be labeled.

**Advancements** in cell phones and hearing aids offer consumers with hearing loss more freedom to use digital wireless devices, increasing the likelihood consumers will be able to find a cell phone they are **able to use**.

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**Q. What is a telecoil?**

A telecoil is a small device that is built into some hearing aids for use with the telephone as well as assistive listening devices. Not all hearing aids have telecoils. To use the telecoil, generally either the hearing aid is switched to the "T" position or a button on the hearing aid is pushed to select the telecoil setting. The telecoil picks up magnetic fields generated by telephones and converts these fields into sound. Telecoils are particularly useful for telephone communication because they permit the volume control of a hearing aid to be turned up without creating feedback or "whistling," and background noise can be reduced, especially when using cell phones in noisy places.

**Q. Are there phones I can use with my hearing aid on the telecoil setting?**

A. There may be phones on the market that work with telecoils but they are not labeled. The FCC regulations require that manufacturers and service providers make available two cell phones for use with hearing aids on the telecoil setting as of September 2006. Phones that have been tested for telecoil and are HAC-compliant will be labeled on the box with ratings of "T3" or "T4." There are already phones on the market that work with hearing aids in the telecoil setting but they may not be labeled.

**Q. May I try the phone before I buy?**

A. It's best to try several phones before buying to find the best match with your hearing aids. Visit a full-service store owned and operated by a service provider and ask to try phones that have been designated as "hearing aid compatible." Since September 2005, stores owned and operated by a wireless service provider are required to provide you with an opportunity to try out phones in the store.