

Hearing Aids and Cell Phones

The cell phone industry would certainly like to make us all believe that it's not possible to live on this planet without owning a cell phone, and vendors can point to startling statistics such as the shipment of 256.4 million units in the first quarter of 2007.¹

Cell phones have gained wide popularity because they offer safety and immediate multimedia communication capabilities such as recording, watching TV, web browsing, text messaging, and writing.²

Despite these amenities and the rapid increase in cell phone usage, not all people find cell phones easy to use. For example, people who use hearing aids frequently complain about the interference between hearing aids and cell phones. Many hearing aid wearers still experience interference when using digital cell phones, particularly if they use the telephone-coil (t-coil) for telephone communication. People with in-the-ear hearing aids or completely-in-the-canal hearing aids generally experience less interference than people with behind-the-ear hearing aids, and the newer, digital hearing aids are generally more resistant to hearing aid interference than older, conventional analog hearing aids.

Compatibility Tips^{3,4}

Work with and follow the advice of an audiologist. When purchasing new hearing aids, patients should be sure to tell their audiologist that they want to be able to use a digital cell phone.

Investigate before you purchase. A Web site that is helpful in differentiating wireless service providers is www.wirelessadvisor.com. By entering a ZIP code, the Wireless Advisor helps to identify which service providers operate in a particular area and the transmission technology being used.

Use the cell phone with a hearing aid when the hearing aid is set in the regular "on" or "mic" (microphone) position. Hold the phone and talk as you normally would on the phone. If using a behind-the-ear hearing aid, hold the receiver slightly higher to the microphone.

Check with your cell phone service provider regarding cell phone models that work with t-coils. Many digital cell phones



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SEEK ADVICE: Tell your audiologist that you want to use a cell phone with your hearing aid.

will create static or interference sounds if used with a hearing aid t-coil.

Try a neck loop. Some wireless telephone manufacturers have developed neck loops that may be used with t-coils. The neck loop permits hands-free use of the cell phone.

Try HATIS (Hearing Aid Telephone Interconnect System), www.hatis.com, a hearing aid accessory which permits a direct connection between the cell phone and hearing aid t-coil. The HATIS system uses a separate earpiece and cord that plugs directly into the cell phone. Some cell phone manufacturers have an accessory to adapt the HATIS to the telephone.

New Technology Will Change How We Hear

The development of new wireless technologies will assist in all communication. The Bluetooth® wireless protocol is already being used and other sophisticated wireless broadband and baseband technologies are becoming available. Hearing instruments that are compatible with these technologies will be able to connect wirelessly with cell phones as well as other devices like PDAs or video game systems.^{4,5,6,7}

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