



Services for Clients with an Implantable Hearing Device

Specialist hearing services

Clients of the Hearing Services Program (program) who use implantable devices such as a cochlear implant or implantable bone conduction device (IBCD), may be eligible to receive [specialist hearing services](#) from Hearing Australia. The Department of Health funds Hearing Australia to provide specialist hearing services through the Community Service Obligations (CSO) component of the program. Clients can choose to stay with their current contracted service provider (provider) or transfer to Hearing Australia for specialist hearing services. It is important for clients to discuss their options with their current provider.

Cochlear implant maintenance

There are two components of a cochlear implant, the implanted component that is surgically placed under the skin, and an externally worn speech processor that sits behind the ear. The speech processor requires ongoing maintenance and programming, just like a hearing aid.

Clients with a cochlear implant(s) may access batteries, repairs and replacement parts through Hearing Australia for their speech processor(s) for a small annual fee.

Hearing Australia does not program or map cochlear implant speech processors. Clients will need to visit their cochlear implant centre to have their implant programmed.

Cochlear implant speech processor upgrades and replacements

Children and young adults aged under 26 who receive hearing services from Hearing Australia may receive replacement and upgrade speech processors through the CSO component of the program if they meet the clinical criteria set by Hearing Australia.

The program does not allow funding for speech processor replacements or upgrades for clients aged 26 and older. In these instances, clients may be supported through private health insurance, Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), or will need to fund the cost of replacements or upgrades themselves.

Alternatively, clients of the program who are National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants may be able to request funding assistance towards processor upgrades or replacements through their funded support package.

Implantable Bone Conduction Devices (IBCD)

IBCDs may include bone anchored devices and middle ear implants. These devices are used as an alternative to traditional air conduction hearing aids for clients with chronic middle ear infections, single sided deafness, or malformation of the external and/or middle ear.

The sound processor of an IBCD may be subsidised through the CSO component of the program when a conventional hearing aid is not medically appropriate. Clients must be assessed by Hearing Australia to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria for an IBCD if this is to be funded through the CSO program.

Clients who have their IBCD(s) fitted by Hearing Australia, can receive hearing services, batteries, maintenance and repairs from Hearing Australia. Eligible clients who have an IBCD fitted outside the program can have these maintained through the CSO program.

Clients with an implantable device and a hearing aid

Clients aged 26 and older who wear a hearing aid on the opposite ear to their implantable device can receive support for their implantable device and all other specialist hearing services, such as hearing aid fittings, maintenance and ongoing management, from Hearing Australia. These clients can also choose to receive parallel services. Parallel services mean adult clients can choose to receive hearing services, batteries, maintenance and repairs for their hearing aid from their current provider under the voucher program, whilst also receiving maintenance and some services for the implantable device from Hearing Australia under the CSO program. Hearing Australia does not provide cochlear implant mapping services for adults aged 26 years and older. Hearing Australia does provide clinical services, devices and maintenance for the IBCD when clients are fitted with this device.

Portal and Claiming

For clients accessing parallel services, the 'parallel services' tick box must be checked in the Hearing Services Online Portal (portal).

For clients with an implantable device and hearing aid, the client should be listed under the provider maintaining and supporting the hearing aid. Only the hearing aid should be entered into the portal, and monaural claims are to be claimed for items including client reviews and maintenance.

Maintenance

If a client chooses to receive parallel services, they may be required to pay an annual maintenance fee to both Hearing Australia and their other provider.

DVA Gold or White card (for hearing loss) holders who have a fully subsidised hearing aid, cochlear implant(s) or IBCD are exempt from maintenance payments. DVA card holders who choose a partially subsidised hearing device will be responsible for any additional costs for its ongoing maintenance and battery supply. Additionally, clients who are NDIS participants may receive the annual maintenance fee contribution as part of their funded support package, where their NDIS Planner has assessed this as being appropriate and necessary.

More information

If clients would like more information about services for clients with implantable devices or specialist hearing and communication needs, please contact Hearing Australia on 131 797.