

Patient information factsheet

Using your smartphone to help you hear

If you have a long-term hearing loss, hearing aids are the best option to help improve your hearing. If you need temporary help with your hearing, you could try some of these apps on your smartphone:

Apps to amplify sound

For Apple devices (version iOS 14.3 or higher)

Use the 'Live Listen' feature to stream and amplify sound from the iPhone microphone to connected earphones. Compatible earphones include AirPods, AirPods Pro, AirPods Max, Powerbeats Pro, Beats Fit Pro (as well as any 'Made for iPhone' hearing aids). You can adjust the tone of the audio played through the earphones using the 'Headphone Accomodation' feature. For full instructions, search online for 'Live Listen with AirPods'.

For older Apple devices

Other amplification apps available on the app store may also work on older devices. Search the app store for 'hearing amplifier free'.

For Android devices (version 6.0 or higher)

Download the 'Sound Amplifier' app from Google Play to amplify sound to connected earphones. This is compatible with wired or Bluetooth headphones. You can adjust the tone and noise reduction. For instructions, search online for 'Android accessibility use sound amplifier'.

For older Android devices

Other amplification apps available on Google Play may also work on older devices. Search the Google Play store for 'hearing amplifier free'.

Apps for live transcription

For Apple devices (version iOS 16.0 and iPhone 11 or higher)

The Live Captions feature turns spoken dialogue into text and displays it in real time on your iPhone screen. For instructions, search online for 'Live captions iPhone'.

For older Apple devices

Transcription apps available on the app store may also work on older devices. Search the app store for 'live transcribe hearing'.

For Android devices (version 10.0 or higher on Pixel and other devices)

The Live transcribe feature captures speech and sound and displays it as text on your phone screen. On and offline versions are available in multiple languages. For instructions, search online for 'Android live transcribe'.

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For older Android devices

Transcription apps available on Google Play may also work on older devices. Search the Google Play store for 'live transcribe hearing'.

Other helpful apps

For Apple devices

- LED Flash for Alerts: A light on the phone flashes when you receive a notification while the phone is locked.
- Mono Audio: The phone plays the same sound to both the left and right speakers. This is helpful for people who have a hearing loss on one side.
- Phone Noise Cancellation: This reduces the background noise on phone calls when you hold the receiver to your ear.
- Background Sounds: This plays background sounds to mask unwanted environmental sounds or tinnitus, and help with relaxation. Options include filtered noise, and ocean, rain or stream sounds.

For Android devices

- Live caption (for version 10.0 or higher on Pixel and some other devices): Speech from media (such as videos, podcasts, phone calls, video calls and audio messages) appears as text captions on your phone screen.
- Sound notifications: Your phone alerts you when sounds occur in your home (such as a smoke alarm beeping or a doorbell ringing).

Privacy settings

Always check that you are happy with the privacy settings on new apps before using them.

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/hearing-aids-and-implants/

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