

Frequently Asked Questions about Hearing Loops

1. How many Canadians live with hearing loss?

According to Statistics Canada, hearing loss and tinnitus are common among Canadian adults. Overall, 38% of adults aged 20 to 79 years had hearing loss, while 37% had tinnitus. Over 77% of older adults aged 60+ experience hearing loss.

2. Why are hearing loops needed? Don't hearing aids enable hearing?

Today's hearing aids enhance hearing in conversational settings. Yet for those with hearing loss the sound becomes unclear when loudspeakers are distant, when the context is noisy, or in rooms that reverberate sound. A hearing loop magnetically transfers microphone or TV sound signals to hearing aids and cochlear implants that have an inexpensive "telecoil" receiver. This transforms the instruments into "in-the-ear" speakers that deliver sound customized for one's own hearing loss.

3. How many hearing aids have telecoils (t-coils) to use with hearing loops?

In Canada, consumer research varies on the number of hearing aids that are fitted with a telecoil. In most cases, all cochlear implant processors have t-coils. Most hearing aid manufacturers provide an option to have a telecoil. In many instances a telecoil is present, however, it must be programmed by audiologists or the professional hearing aid dispenser.

4. Can hearing loops serve those without telecoils or even without hearing aids?

Yes, all forms of assistive listening, including hearing loops, work with portable receivers and headsets.

5. What does a hearing loop cost?

Costs range from \$350 to \$450 for self-installed home TV room loops, and several thousand dollars or more for professional installation in an average-sized auditorium or worship space. Large facilities with embedded metal will be more expensive. Auditorium hearing loops cost somewhat more than do other assistive listening systems, which require a receiver and headset. But the cost per user is typically less (because many more people will use assistive listening that is hearing aid compatible). Moreover, hearing loops offer long-term savings from purchasing and maintaining batteries in fewer portable listening units. For the user, the inexpensive telecoil does not add to the hearing aid price.

6. Hearing loops harness magnetic energy; is magnetic interference problematic?

Generally, not. Old computer monitors, old fluorescent lighting, and some old dimmer switches may generate interference, as do some cars and all airplanes. But the experience in thousands of venues is that interference-free installation is nearly always possible.

7. Isn't this a decades-old technology?

Like computers, magnetic induction loop technology began some 80 years ago, but continue to be updated and improved, offering new forms with new amplifier and telecoil technologies, and new computer-modeled designs for complex installations.

8. Don't newer connective technologies work better?

New wireless technologies, including Bluetooth, 2.4GHz radio frequency, and Wi-Fi, enable binaural phone and stereo TV listening. Such technologies, while helpful in a variety of situations, are not useful in large venues and group settings and are not hearing aid compatible with assistive listening systems, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

For connective technologies to evolve and provide the same benefits as hearing loops, they will need to:

- Be inexpensive—essentially no cost to the consumer
- Be capable of covering a large venue
- Require little battery power—telecoils require no power
- Be available worldwide
- Be sufficiently miniaturized to fit in nearly all hearing aids
- Transmit the audio signal without audible latency
- Be reasonable frictionless to use

9. Can hearing loops be used in adjacent rooms?

Yes, with a professional design that controls sound spillover.

10. What are the advantages of using a hearing loop for home TV listening?

Multiple people with hearing loss can watch television at the same time, each person receiving clear, clean sound directly through their telecoil enabled hearing aid or cochlear implant. Home hearing loop systems are generally less expensive than alternative hearing aid or cochlear implant television accessories. Also, hearing loops don't lose connectivity like sometimes happens with Bluetooth.

11. What are the advantages to using hearing loops in public settings?

A hearing aid compatible loop system delivers individualized sound that is customized by one's hearing aids. In public settings, their main advantage is simplicity: people need only activate their telecoils. There's no need to get up, seek out, and wear conspicuous equipment, which few people with hearing loss take the initiative to do. Additionally, there is no feedback as sometimes happens with headphones, which can bother others. There is no need to juggle between headphones and hearing aids. And there are no hygiene concerns related to sharing public devices.

12. Can hearing loops work in transient venues such as airports, ticket windows, or drive-up order stations?

Yes! A hearing loop enables clear sound for a person with hearing loss at pharmacies, information desks, subway ticket counters, and taxis, or when passing through airports and train stations. As example, in Canada - BC Ferries, Edmonton International Airport, City of Burlington are a few that have installed hearing loops.

13. Who makes hearing loops and where can they be purchased?

A variety of established manufacturers are designing and marketing hearing loop amplifiers for a wide variety of installations, from home TV rooms to taxi back seats and ticket windows to cathedrals. For more information on vendors email us at: loops@chha.ca

