

Understanding Hearing Aid Compatibility

Background

Digital technology allows for more features and improved efficiency in cell phones, but not all cell phones are compatible with hearing aids. Cell phones emit radio frequency emissions which can create an audible interference when using a cell phone with a hearing aid. The Federal Communications Commission or FCC has mandated that some wireless phones be compatible with hearing aids.

FCC Requirements and Hearing Aid Compatibility

The FCC standard of compatibility of wireless phones with hearing aids is set by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI) and contains two sets of standards – an M rating and a T rating. The M rating is for hearing aids without a telecoil mode and the T rating is for hearing aids with a telecoil mode. The most compatible phones for non-telecoil hearing aids have an M3 or M4 rating. For hearing aids with a telecoil, the most compatible phones have a T3 or T4 rating.

In addition to rating the wireless phone, the ANSI standard also rates hearing aids from M1 to M4, with M4 being the most immune to RF interference. Hearing aid ratings are added to the rating of the wireless phone to determine the level of performance. Hearing aids and phones with a combined rating of 4 indicate the phone is “usable”. A combined rating of 5 provides “normal use” and a sum of 6 or greater provides “excellent performance”.

How to Select the Correct Wireless Phone

We have several models of wireless phones that are hearing aid compatible. Choosing the best model is a matter of personal preference as well as the type of hearing aid that you have. We have listed the ANSI ratings for these phones on our website and on the in-store phone displays. You are always welcome to test a hearing aid compatible phone at our store.