



## Travel Tips for the Hearing Impaired

### Insights for hearing-impaired travelers

- What are common problems?
- What arrangements can be made?
- How should hearing aids be handled when traveling?
- and more...

Travel is an important part of our lives. Whether for business or vacation, traveling can be as stressful as it is enjoyable, and for more than 20 million people in the U.S. with hearing loss, travel can be especially difficult.

### *What are common problems?*

- Inability to hear or understand airline boarding and in-flight announcements
- Difficulty making reservations
- Inability to hear hotel room telephones, someone knocking on the door, or warning signals such as smoke alarms
- Difficulty using public telephones, hotel phones, cell phones, etc.
- Inability to hear or understand scheduled events such as planned activities, tours, museum lectures, and live performances
- Lack of oral and/or sign language interpreters
- Lack of accommodations for hearing dogs

### *What arrangements can be made?*

- Try to make all travel arrangements in advance. Once transportation arrangements have been made, request written confirmation to ensure that information is correct. Always inform the ticket representative that you are hearing-impaired.
- If possible, meet with a travel agent to allow the opportunity for lip reading, or if necessary, written exchange to help confirm travel plans. Agents can contact airlines, hotels, and attractions to make necessary reservations.
- Travel information and reservation services are also available on the internet. Be sure to print copies of important information such as confirmation numbers, reservations, and

maps. Keep copies of travel arrangements, including confirmation numbers, easily available.

- Arrive early at the airport, bus terminal, or train station. Tell the agent at the boarding gate that you are hearing-impaired and need to be notified in person when it's time to board.
- Check the display board repeatedly while waiting in the terminal to confirm your flight destination and departure time as there may be delays or the departure gate may change. Confirm the flight number and destination before boarding.
- Inform the flight attendant that you are hearing-impaired and request that any in-flight announcements be communicated to you in person. Consider reserving aisle seats so that you may easily communicate with the flight staff.
- *Do not be afraid to ask for help from fellow travelers—most are more than willing to offer assistance.*

### ***How should hearing aids be handled when traveling?***

- If you wear a hearing aid, be sure to pack extra batteries and tubing. These may be difficult to obtain in some places.
- Strongly consider taking a dehumidifier for drying your hearing aids each night to prevent moisture problems, especially if your destination has a warm, humid climate.
- To prevent loss, avoid storing your hearing aid equipment in checked luggage. Keep an extra set of batteries in a separate piece of luggage to prevent total loss of hearing aid use.

### ***What other resources are available?***

- Many major airlines and transportation companies have Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) services to assist passengers.
- Hand-held personal communication devices (e.g., cellular phones and smartphones) provide the ability to send and receive text messages without the need to access public resources. Ask your travel agent or check your reservation website to see if this option is available.
- All public telephones should now have a “blue grommet” attachment to the handset indicating it is compatible with the “T” switch or telephone program in hearing aids. Some public phones have an amplifying headset, or you can purchase a pocket amplifier from your audiologist or hearing aid dispenser. Cellular phones have solved many of these problems. All manufacturers have models that are also compatible with your hearing aid. You can search the internet by typing in “HAC phones” (hearing aid compatible) to get more information.



- Smartphones often have applications for travelling. Such programs or email programs can store reservation information. Some applications offer real-time alerts for changes in flight plans, and others have maps that can provide directions.

### ***What other devices are helpful?***

- Telephone amplifiers and induction couplers can be attached to public or hotel phones and can help increase the volume of the telephone. Induction couplers also make the telephone compatible with your hearing aid telecoil. Telephone manufacturers produce handsets such as the G6 and G66, which plug easily into any modular telephone. Using your own compatible cellular phone, however, not only eliminates these problems, but is also less expensive.
- There are small portable visual alert systems available that flash light when the telephone rings or fire alarm sounds. These can be transported and easily installed in hotel rooms. In the U.S. they should be provided if you ask.
- FM listening systems can provide direct amplification in large areas using radio frequency. They can help the hearing-impaired traveler listen to lectures, tours, etc., by simply having the speaker use a transmitter microphone, broadcasting the presentation over the radio waves to the receiver.
- Portable infrared systems can be used with hotel televisions and radios. These transmit sound via invisible infrared light to a listener's receiver.
- Portable wake-up alarms can be used to flash a light or vibrate a bed or pillow. A cellular phone can also work as a vibrating alarm.
- Portable TV band radios can be tuned to compatible TV channels and listened to through an earphone. You can set the volume to suit yourself and watch TV without disturbing others, or you can turn on the closed captioning (CC) feature of the TV so that you can read the dialogue. There may be a 'CC' button on the TV remote control, or you may have to activate closed captioning through the TV's menu options.

### ***Will I need to take my hearing aids out for security screening?***

In most cases, hearing aids worn on the ears will not set off of the alarms during security screening at airports. Keeping the hearing aids on will allow you to communicate with the security officers during screening, if necessary. It is ok to ask a security officer if it would be advisable to take your hearing aids off; however, body worn hearing aids and personal listening devices may contain enough metal parts that they should be packed in your carryon bag. The security scanner will not harm your hearing aids or other related devices.

### ***Lodging***

- Carry printed copies of lodging reservations, dates, and prices.



- Inform the receptionist at the front desk that you are hearing-impaired. This is very important in case of emergency.
- Certain major hotel chains now provide visual alerting devices to help the hearing-impaired traveler recognize the ring of the telephone, a knock on the door, or a fire/emergency alarm. Contact the hotel in advance to make the necessary arrangements.

There are many things that hearing-impaired people can do to help make their travels safe, comfortable, and enjoyable. Don't avoid travelling because of hearing loss. Planning ahead and informing your fellow travelers, transportation hosts, and hotel clerks that you are hearing-impaired are a few suggestions to help your trip run smoothly. Lastly, obtain any necessary devices—and enjoy yourself!



Empowering otolaryngologist—head and neck surgeons to deliver the best patient care

1650 Diagonal Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2857 U.S.A. 1-703-836-4444 1-703-683-5100 fax [www.entnet.org](http://www.entnet.org)