



News you can use

No Telecoils? No Problem

By Stephen O. Frazier

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Far too many people with hearing loss only learn about telecoils and hearing loops after they have already purchased hearing aids. They may visit a performing arts hall, a place of worship, or an HLAA chapter meeting and learn that the venue has a hearing loop and how it interacts with hearing aids. Then they learn, after a query to their hearing care provider, that the hearing aids they were recently sold do not have that particular feature. In the past this was a bummer but, for some, things have changed.

There are now remote microphones for hearing aids that can be placed on the lapel of your dinner companion, placed at the far end of a long conference table, or placed at the podium or on the lapel of a lecturer. They pick up sound and transmit it via Bluetooth® to the user's hearing aids, bringing distant sounds as strong and clear as if it's coming from three feet away. This is only the first feature some of these devices now offer. Several of the more advanced models contain a telecoil in addition to the mic so they serve double duty. That device's telecoil will pick up the electromagnetic signal of a hearing loop and relay it to the user's Bluetooth enabled hearing aids.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

To add frosting to the cake, some of these mics will perform the same function with an FM assistive listening system (ALS), tripling the functionality of the hearing aids. For some of these devices, the useful features don't stop here – they go on to perform some of the functions of a standard remote control that will turn the hearing aids on or off, raise or lower the volume, change from one memory to another and more. Information on each of them is available on the applicable website but it is not always as complete or accessible as one might want and, often, training videos are not captioned.

EXAMPLES

Resound Multi Mic - This remote hearing aid microphone offers users a small, flexible solution that allows them to hear from up to 80 feet away without having to wear any sort of extra devices around the neck.

Alternatively, the mic can be placed horizontally on a table or other level surface and it will automatically switch to a mode optimized to pick up the voices of multiple speakers. For one-on-one situations it can be clipped vertically onto the



clothing of another person nearby and make their voice stronger than it would be using just the mics in your hearing aids. ReSound says this holds true even in background noise.

The Multi Mic also connects to hearing loop and FM systems and additional flexibility is available by using its mini-jack input to connect directly to virtually any device with a headphone jack. Again, the mic streams that sound to the user's hearing aids via Bluetooth. It takes 3 hours to fully charge a discharged Multi Mic and no information on the hours of use before recharging is required did not seem to be available. The Resound Multi Mic can be found online for prices ranging from \$249 to \$410.

Widex Sound Assist - This multi-function accessory is intended to improve communication in a variety of situations. Compact and lightweight, the Sound Assist offers six different functions to help the end user hear optimally in any complex environment or situation where noise could hinder understanding.



In the partner microphone mode, one-to-one conversations sound clearer than using just the mics in the hearing aids in many settings. Used as a table mic the user can hear better at important meetings, dinner parties and in group conversations. Hands free phone calls are possible using this device and, in the streaming mode, audio can be streamed from a connected Bluetooth device to your hearing aids. The telecoil mode allows the user to connect to the signal from a hearing loop even though the hearing aids do not, themselves, contain such coils. The device also functions as a remote control to make adjustment to the sound from partnered hearing aids.

The Sound Assist mic has a run time of 10 hours and takes 3 hours to recharge its Li-ion battery. List price is \$499 but they can be found online for as little as \$349.

Starkey Remote Plus – This microphone is the larger and more versatile of the two personal mics in Starkey's 2.4GHz wireless accessory range. Like the smaller Mini Remote mic, it can be clipped to the clothing of your conversation partner to pick up his or her voice and send it wirelessly to various Starkey hearing aids. It can also double as a TV listening device and functions as an assistive listening device for one-to-one conversation in a noisy environment like a restaurant. When worn by someone, the microphone will automatically prioritize sound from directly above while reducing sound from other directions. The Remote+ microphone can also be placed flat on a table for use in quieter group conversations where it will pick up sound from all directions.

The Remote Microphone+ can pair with up to 8 different Bluetooth devices so it can be used for hands free phone calls or listening to media from a variety of sources streamed directly to hearing aids. In addition, it can also direct sound from loop systems using its built in telecoil or as a receiver for FM systems. Compatible Starkey hearing aids include several Evolv and Livio models. A visit to the Starkey website will find a list of all compatible Starkey models.



The Remote Plus can stream for up to 10 hours on a full charge and requires 3 hours to fully recharge. An LED status indicator will blink red accompanied by an audible tone in your hearing aids every 5 minutes when the battery is low. The Remote Plus can be found online for anywhere from \$375.00 to \$545.00

Oticon EduMic - The MultiConnect EduMic can be connected to an unlimited number of paired Oticon 2.4 GHz enabled hearing aids at the same time, allowing for several users in the same room. Target users were students in the mic's development thus the EduMic name but education doesn't stop when you graduate.



EduMic is always ready to pair. Once hearing aids are in pairing mode and within 20 cm (7-8 inches), EduMic will automatically pair and connect to them. It will automatically connect with hearing aids within a 20 m (65 ft.) range by initiating a program change in the hearing aid. This way, hearing aids can connect to EduMic without using the hearing aid push button. Audio from a 3.5 mm jack connection is also possible and streamed directly in stereo to all hearing aids. Through the FM/DAI connection and the telecoil, EduMic will stream sound from classroom microphone and teleloop systems respectively.

Charging time for full charging is 2.5 hours. When the power indicator flashes RED, there is approximately 2 hours of battery life remaining and a quick 30 minute charge during a break provides approximately 2.5 hours of use.

This is the most expensive of the mics explored and will retail for as much as \$1,100.00 but an online search found it available for \$586.90 at one source.

Beltone MyPal Pro - Like its sister device, the ReSound mic, this remote unit will stream not only sound picked up by its microphone but sound emanating from a hearing loop or FM assistive listening system. For microphone use it has a directional mic for clear, crisp sound that will not "hear" some of the background noise emanating from other directions. It features its own volume control and mute functions and, should it be dropped from a height of 30 inches or more, it will automatically mute the sound transmission. Its visual status indicators let you keep an eye on the current status and mode of operation. It has a battery life of 10 hours and the price at various offices online is \$400.00



The MyPAL Pro is compatible with the following Beltone hearing aids:

- Beltone [Imagine](#)
- Beltone [Amaze](#)
- Beltone [Rely](#)
- Beltone [Boost Ultra](#)

WORTH NOTING

These devices are pricey but invaluable to those where hearing well is a priority. On online search for any will find them available at a variety of prices and unlike buying hearing aids that need to be adjusted for each individual, there's no sort of service needed other than possibly to charge the mic when it arrives.

Like many higher priced electronic devices, some people will buy, try and then sell those they find don't meet their needs or their expectations. When this happens, many of them end up on Ebay. At the time this article was being written there were two Starkey Remote+ mics for sale there – one for \$39.99 that had a broken clip but the one for \$69.99 was reported to be in good working condition.

If your hearing aids sometimes are just not sufficient for the situation, one of these remote mics might solve your hearing problem and let you hear what you've been missing and to fully participate in what's going on.