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NEWS WATCH: COMMUNICATION; Hearing Aid and Cellphone Call a Truce

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By **MARC WEINGARTEN**

Published: November 27, 2003, Thursday

Wireless technology has not been kind to most people who wear hearing aids: because the older models lack internal shields to segregate digital frequencies, the devices are vulnerable to interference from cellphones. As a result, some 12 million people around the world are said to hear a buzz or static during cellphone conversations.

Myers Johnson, a San Francisco company focusing on products that give the hearing-impaired better access to telecommunications, has developed an antenna to banish the annoying garble. The Vortis antenna clips onto the phone and reduces the amount of energy the phone emits laterally toward the user's head, reducing interference and improving clarity. The antenna also increases the phone's signal strength by redirecting the energy toward the front and rear of the user, the company says.

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The antenna, which is expected to reach stores by the end of the year at a suggested price of \$79.95, will work with a variety of Nokia phones, and Myers Johnson says it is working with other cellphone manufacturers on potential compatibility. More information on the antenna is available at www.thevortis.com. Myers Johnson says it is preparing a special service package that will include a free phone. For more details, send a message to info@thevortis.com. Marc Weingarten

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