



Setting Language in Motion: Family Supports and Early Intervention for Babies Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Tips for Successful Hearing Aid Use

It is very important for children utilizing hearing aids to wear them during all waking hours. It may take a while for a child to build up to full-time use. Once the hearing aids are tolerated by the child, leave them on for as long as possible during the day. If the child seems to be having difficulty adjusting to the hearing aids, call your child's audiologist. The hearing aids may need additional adjustment or the audiologist may have some other suggestions for encouraging hearing aid use.

Establish a Routine

Many parents and early interventionists have found that establishing a routine for when the hearing aids are put on the child helps in the acceptance of them. For example, every day after breakfast the hearing aids are put on. The time selected should be when the child is well-rested, not hungry, and in a good or playful mood. It should also be at a time when you can play with or read to the child so the child is hearing meaningful sounds. Some children will wear their hearing aids best when they can watch a favorite TV program or listen to their favorite music. Avoid putting the hearing aids on when rushed until the child becomes a full-time hearing aid user.

With a properly fit hearing aid that is worn regularly, there are many opportunities for natural learning in a child's everyday life. Children learn a lot by overhearing conversations between parents, siblings, television, and radio. If a child is not wearing a hearing aid, he or she cannot overhear these conversations and cannot take advantage of this valuable learning opportunity. For this reason, it is so important to have the child become used to wearing the hearing aids all day every day.

MODULE THREE Hearing Aids: The Basics

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Tips for Getting the Hearing Aids into the Ears

Putting a very thin coating of petroleum jelly on the canal portion of the earmold may help the mold slide into the ear canal. Gently pull back and up on the earlobe as you insert the mold; this helps to straighten out the bends in the ear canal. Try to line up the earmold in the position it needs to be and put it straight in. For some twisting the mold a bit may help, but for others a 'straight shot' works better. If an earmold continues to be difficult to insert, it may have to be remade.

How to Stop a Hearing Aid from 'Whistling'

This whistling sound is called *feedback*. It is caused by sound leaking out of the ear and going back into the hearing aid where it is re-amplified. The child may or may not be able to hear this, but it does prevent the hearing aid from amplifying sound properly. The following steps help to prevent this from happening:

1. *Make sure the earmold is in the ear properly.* Pull back gently on the earlobe and gently push the earmold all the way in. Sometimes just a small part of the mold may not be seated

properly, and this is where the sound leakage is coming from.

2. *Remove the earmold and check for wax buildup.* If there is wax buildup in the canal portion of the mold or moisture in the tubing, this can cause feedback.
3. *Check the ear canal for wax buildup.* If there is wax buildup in the ear canal, it can prevent sound from being easily transmitted down the ear canal. A consultation with a pediatrician may be needed.
4. *If the feedback continues,* the child may need a new earmold to ensure a tighter fit.

How to Encourage the Daily Use and Safety of the Hearing Aids

It is difficult to watch a child every moment of the day, so below are ideas for keeping the hearing aids safe if the child does remove them.

- A lightweight bonnet or baby cap can be tied lightly under the child's chin to help keep the hearing aids in place.
- A hearing aid retainer can successfully keep the hearing aids on the ears. This is a small attachment to the hearing aid that can help hold the hearing aid on the ear.
- A piece of ribbon or yarn tied to the ear hook of each hearing aid can keep it from being lost. The string should be

just long enough to reach the collar on the back of the child's shirt and pinned on with a safety pin. This way, if the child removes the hearing aids, they will hang on the string. Cords designed for eyeglasses can also be used. Ear clips (a pre-made clip that may have an animal head on the clip and two plastic rings attached to the strings to snugly fit around the ear hooks) are also available for purchase. ***If you elect to try any of these suggestions, keep a close eye on the child as the string can pose a strangulation hazard.***

- Many children get used to their hearing aids with little or no difficulty. If this is not the case, contact your child's audiologist. Sometimes a minor adjustment to a hearing aid or earmold will make things better. Perhaps the child has a yet-undiagnosed ear infection or middle ear fluid that is causing discomfort in the ear.
- **Don't give up! It will get easier.** Most children go through a normal period of development when they won't keep the hearing aids in their ears. This is a normal phase and they should outgrow it.

For Additional Resources

Please refer to the Module 3 video for more tips and information as well as for additional resources. Also, visit our websites at www.bostonchildrenshospital.org/dhhp and <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>.