
Introducing And Maintaining Your Child's Hearing Aids

Your hearing aid professional has determined the correct aids for your child, and earmolds have been made. It is time to return for your little one's first fitting. You will be instructed about the type of batteries to use, how to turn on the hearing aids, and how to place the earmolds in your child's ears. You may feel overwhelmed with all the information, and concerned that you will never be able to keep your child still long enough to get near her ears with her new amplification.

First, please don't attempt to put the aids on your child the minute you get home. Both you and your child may be tired or tense. Wait until you are rested. Then give your youngster something to hold that she enjoys -- a picture book or a favorite toy. Or perhaps a new toy that she can play with as she sits near you or on your lap would be a good idea. Set up a situation that will be pleasant so she will begin associating listening with an enjoyable activity. If possible, choose a time that will be free of interruptions.

Think of how you feel about the hearing aids. If **you** know that they will give your child a great advantage in learning to communicate, you will feel confident about putting them on her. Your attitude is "catching" and will almost surely be reflected in your child.

Then, hold your child on your lap and slip the earmold into the ear opening. Hold the earmold and let the hearing aid lay against the back of your hand. Next, slip the earmold in by inserting the end



into the ear canal, and easing the earmold back into the ear. By using a twisting motion, the earmold will "seat" itself better in the ear canal. When the earmold is secure, place the hearing aid over the ear.

As soon as the aids are on, involve your child in the activity you have planned. Hold her and sing or talk softly. You can look at a picture book together. Your conversation is important, so talk, **talk, TALK**. Don't focus on reading the story. Instead, just talk about the pictures. Speak close to the aid in a moderate voice. Or offer a toy and enter into her activity as she plays with it. Talk easily and naturally. Make listening pleasant. Keep the aid on for a fairly short time at first, increasing the "aid on" time little by little each day. Your goal is to have it on all the time your child is awake. The one exception is when it might get wet – as in the bathtub or a wading pool. Hearing aids and water aren't compatible!

Some children develop a habit of pulling off the hearing aids. Although it is natural for parents to become very frustrated, this is the time to keep calm. If you overreact and get excited, she may do it again and again to get a reaction. Calmly replace the aids in her ears – or even simply put them aside until your child is in a more cooperative mood. Here again, a confident attitude of expecting your child to leave the aids alone will help.

When your child pulls off her hearing aids, the aids can easily be lost. Here is a suggestion that will keep the aids close to her at all times. Tie a fine string or



strong thread to the aid, around the small part next to the flexible plastic tubing. Then tie the other end to a small safety pin and pin it on the back of her shirt near the collar. Be sure the string is long enough for her to turn her head, but not so long that she can pull off the hearing aids and put them in her mouth.

Besides keeping the aids on, it is important to keep them in good working condition. Many parents have found that doing a daily maintenance and listening check (it goes quickly once you've done it a few times) assures that the child is getting the most out of her aids. It's a good idea to follow this routine each day so that this becomes a habit.

Use a battery tester to determine that the batteries will last through the day. Batteries should measure 1.5 volts. If the voltage is 1.1 or lower, use a fresh battery.

Then attach the aid to the listening stethoscope. Turn it on and listen. Whisper a few words and say the Ling Six Sounds, which are:

- Ah – as in father
- Oo – as in moon
- Ee – as in key
- Sh - as in show
- S – as in sock
- M – as in mommy

These Ling Six Sounds cover the sounds of speech from low

to high frequency. When you listen to your child's hearing aids, they should always sound clear to you. On occasion, you might find that they sound fuzzy or distorted. Or, there might be silent spots as you turn up the volume. Any time there is a change in the quality of the sounds you hear, it is very important that the hearing aids be checked immediately by your hearing care professional. Your child needs consistently good amplification in order to develop spoken language.

You will also want to check the earmolds for wax. Earmolds can easily be removed from the hearing aids and washed in warm water. A toothpick can be used to remove the wax. Dry the earmolds with a soft cloth and use an earmold blower at the opening to remove moisture.



In humid weather, you may want to put the hearing aids in a dry pack to help draw out moisture. Ask your audiologist or hearing aid professional about one. To make one yourself, place the aid in a tightly closed plastic container with some silicon packets which can be obtained from an electronics store.

Remember, your child's hearing aids are her link with the world. You are the person to keep them working properly so that she will always enjoy the sounds she hears.
