

- Listening Stethoscope
- Dehumidifier
- Air Blower
- Feedback
- Huggie Aids
- Otoclips



## Questions

- **How long each day does my child have to wear hearing aids?**
- **How do I know if my child's hearing aids are working properly?**
- **How do I take care of the hearing aids?**
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- **How often does my child need to see the audiologist?**

- **How long each day does my child have to wear hearing aids?**

Your child should wear the hearing aids all day, every day – except when bathing, swimming or sleeping. Research shows that appropriate amplification helps the auditory nervous system to mature, and that “stop and go” amplification confuses the language learning process that is occurring in the brain. Wearing both hearing aids during all possible waking hours will give your child the best opportunity to listen and learn about all the sounds around him or her.

- **How do I know if my child's hearing aids are working properly?**

It is important to check your child's hearing aids every day. This includes listening to the aids and checking the batteries. Your audiologist and parent advisor can show you how to do a daily listening check. Also, observe your child throughout the day. Is your child pulling the aids out more frequently than usual? If so, the hearing aids may not be working properly, or your child may have an ear infection. If you are not sure that the hearing aids are working well, have your audiologist check them. A hearing aid that is not working will not help your child.

- **How do I take care of the hearing aids?**

Hearing aids are durable but not indestructible. Have a set routine every day and night for the care of the hearing aids – from taking them out at naptime to cleaning and checking them at night. Store the aids in a specific place when not worn (preferably in a dehumidifier, see tools below). Be sure to keep the hearing aids away from excessive heat, do not leave them inside hot cars, near heaters, or in windowsills. Do not store them in a bathroom and do not get the hearing aids wet. Keep hearing aids away from animals – a dog or cat can chew the hearing aids and earmolds. Keep batteries away from children and animals and dispose of them safely. Also do not keep batteries where they may be mistaken for medication – batteries are dangerous if swallowed. If your child does swallow a battery, or any part of the hearing aid, take him or her to the emergency room immediately. It's a good idea to have a regular schedule for changing the batteries. Your audiologist can tell you about battery life for your child's hearing aids.



### • **What tools do I need to keep the hearing aids working their best?**

Your audiologist will demonstrate the various tools needed to maintain your child's hearing aids. Some useful and inexpensive tools include: a cleaning cloth (to wipe off the hearing aid and earmold, be sure it's clean and dry), a **listening stethoscope** (a tube that connects to an earmold to listen for problems with the sound quality in the hearing aid or any buttons or controls that may not be working), a battery tester, a **dehumidifier** (a canister to store the hearing aids in each night to remove excess moisture), an **earmold blower** (to force moisture out of the earmold tubing after it is washed), and cleaning tools such as a brush and a wax loop (to remove cerumen and debris). It is also important to have extra batteries. Always keep some with you or at your child care facility so the batteries can be changed if needed when your child is away from home. Your audiologist can provide these tools to you.

### • **What can I do when my child's hearing aid makes a whistling noise?**

This whistling noise, which is called **feedback**, occurs when amplified sound finds its way back through the hearing aid microphone. This happens when the earmold is not placed in the ear properly or when the earmold does not fit. Try pushing the earmold in for a better fit; sometimes this is all that is needed. Your child's ears are also growing very quickly and frequent feedback can be a signal that new earmolds are needed. In addition, objects placed close to the ear (such as a hat) may focus escaping sound into the microphone causing feedback even when the earmold is fitting properly. This happens often with infants when their head is against bedding or against the person who's holding them. If this happens with your child, or you have any other ongoing problems with feedback, contact your child's audiologist to discuss additional solutions.

### • **What do I need to know about caring for earmolds?**

It is important that earmolds fit tightly and comfortably so that the hearing aid can perform as well as possible. For infants, earmolds may have to be made monthly. As your child gets older and growth slows down, earmolds will fit for a longer time period. After a few weeks, the earmold may turn a yellowish color. This is a stain caused by cerumen (earwax) and is not harmful. You can wash earmolds with warm soapy water. Use an air blower to force moisture out of the earmold tubing after washing. Be sure the earmolds are completely dry before attaching them to the hearing aids. Do not use a hair dryer on earmolds or hearing aids. If the tubing attached to the earmold becomes yellow and brittle, it can affect the sound quality or cause feedback. Your audiologist can replace the tubing.

### • **How can I keep the hearing aids on my child?**

This is probably the most difficult challenge parents face when aiding a young child. Infants and young children will pull their hearing aids off — children are curious! When your child pulls off the aids, put them back on and be consistent in letting your child know that the hearing aids stay on. Your audiologist can also provide **Huggie Aids** (thin plastic rings that attach to the hearing aid and around your child's ear to hold the hearing aids in place) or **otoclips** (clips with cord that hook to the hearing aids and attaches to clothing). Sometimes a very thin cotton cap can be worn until your child learns to leave the hearing aid in place.

### • **How often does my child need to see the audiologist?**

Your audiologist will set up a schedule for regular evaluations. Generally, infants are seen at least every three months after the initial fitting and recheck. Many times they need to be seen monthly to get new earmolds. As your child gets older, every six to nine months is a more common schedule. If you suspect any change at all in your child's hearing or question how effectively the hearing aids are performing, you should contact your audiologist immediately.