



## Monitoring Hearing

Children can experience changes in their hearing for a variety of reasons. Some changes can be temporary, such as having fluid in the ear from an ear infection. Some changes, however, can be permanent. Monitoring hearing for children who wear hearing aids is especially important because changes in hearing need to be addressed so the child is able to hear well.

During monitoring visits, the audiologist, will check your child's hearing, your child's hearing aids, and earmolds. If changes are found, your child's hearing aids may need to be adjusted. Monitoring visits are frequent for younger children, about every two to three months, and by the time your child is school-age, monitoring visits are typically about every six months. If you have concerns or your child's hearing is changing, monitoring visits may be needed more often.

Several tests are done during these monitoring appointments. The audiologist will look at your child's hearing levels using ear phones. If needed, bone conduction testing will be done to look more closely at the type of hearing loss, particularly if there is a change in hearing. This provides information about whether the change is temporary or permanent.

The audiologist will also do testing to see how your child's middle ear is functioning. Many children have ear infections, and when there is fluid in the middle ear space, it can be harder for your child to hear.

The audiologist will also test how your child responds to speech. This can be done through the earphones without wearing the hearing aids, and through the speaker while your child is wearing his or her hearing aids. Depending on the child's age, this can be done in quiet and in noise. When your child is tested wearing hearing aids, the test can also be done at different loudness levels, to see how your child understands speech at an average conversational level compared to understanding soft speech. It is helpful for this to be done for each ear individually and both ears together. This can help the audiologist identify if your child is experiencing any problems hearing with the hearing aids.

After testing your child's hearing, the audiologist will check how your child's hearing aids are working. This includes listening to the hearing aids, checking the physical condition, and checking how the earmolds are fitting in your child's ears.

Special equipment is used to check how your child's hearing aids are working. A test called an electroacoustic analysis checks the loudness level of the hearing aids, and to see if there are problems with distortion of the sounds.

The audiologist may also perform a real ear test. This provides information about how the hearing aids are working when your child is wearing them. For very young children, this test is simulated in the test box and looks like the electroacoustic analysis test. Real ear or simulated real ear testing needs to be done every time your child gets new earmolds.



As an infant, your child may need new ear molds every few weeks because their ears are growing quickly. The earmolds need to fit snugly in your child's ear, and as your child grows, can quickly become too small. An audiologist will take impressions of your child's ear to get the new earmolds. It is important to schedule an appointment for the earmold fitting as soon as possible after the earmolds are ready, because your child will continue to grow. If it is time to get new earmolds, you may want to ask your audiologist if the earmolds can be ordered before your monitoring appointment. This way, your child can be fit with the new earmolds at the hearing aid monitoring appointment.

During the monitoring appointment, the audiologist may ask you to complete a questionnaire to learn more about what you have been observing at home while your child is wearing his or her hearing aids.

There are several different questionnaires that can be used. The audiologist will consider your child's age and developmental level to decide which questionnaire to use. Observing your child at home will help you understand what your child is hearing, and to recognize if something does not seem right. You have an important role, you know your child best, and the audiologist wants your input. Monitoring visits are important for helping your child hear well with their hearing aids. Be sure to talk about your child's monitoring visit plan with your audiologist and ask questions when you do not understand, or if you feel your child's needs are not being met.