



## Hearing Aid Use

Children need to hear speech sounds to learn how to listen and talk. To do this, children need hearing aids that are set right for their hearing levels, that are functioning properly, and they need to use them consistently, that is, whenever they are awake.

Children learn to talk by listening to what is happening around them. They are listening and learning even when the conversation is not directed at them. This is called incidental learning.

Children who wear their hearing aids whenever they are awake have better spoken language outcomes than children who wear them less often, and this is important to help them be ready for school.

A parent shared his experience learning how to have his child wear his hearing technology. "After the technology is identified, and the child is equipped with it, and it's programmed or tuned so it's providing the maximum benefit, another challenge can be, especially with younger children, keeping the technology on. And by on, I mean literally on their ears. I remember that my son would frequently remove his hearing aid before he had cochlear implants, and he would enjoy holding it, looking at it, and sucking on it, and then sometimes he would throw it. And, it was a game for us. Well, every minute that it's off his head is one minute that he is now listening, and so that's a challenge. My mother, who is an excellent seamstress, made a modified version of some aviator hats. Perhaps, you have seen those. They have a covering that comes well over the ears and then she added a nice chin strap so that we could tie it, and my son was not at that point dexterous enough to untie it and to remove the hat and get at the hearing aids or cochlear implants. We had him wear those for many months until he was familiar enough with the technology and enjoyed having the sound to prevent him from taking them off or from losing them."

Is this statement a myth or a fact? It is helpful to give your child a break from their hearing aids on the weekends.

This is a myth. Hearing aids should be used all waking hours every day. This allows your child to learn from all their daily experiences.

Is this statement a myth or a fact? If your child responds to sounds without their hearing aids, they only need to wear them sometimes.



This is a myth. Your child may respond to some sounds without their hearing aids; however, there are some sounds they will not hear as well as others. Without the hearing aids, your child will miss certain speech sounds and experience more difficulty developing language.

Is this statement a myth or a fact? Listening without hearing aids can make your child feel more fatigued.

This is a fact. Listening without hearing aids is harder for your child. They will use more energy to try and understand what is happening around them and they may feel more fatigued.

Is this statement a myth or a fact? Parents often overestimate how much their children use their hearing aids.

This is a fact. It can be difficult for parents to gauge how consistently young children wear their hearing aids. Hearing aids have a feature called data logging that tracks how many hours your child's hearing aids are used each day. Datalogging provides information on the average hours of daily hearing aid use and this can help you identify when there is a problem with hearing aid use, and when problems have been resolved. Ask your audiologist to share datalogging results with you at each visit.

Is this statement a myth or a fact? Children who wear their hearing aids 10 or more hours per day have better language outcomes.

This is a fact. Children who wear their hearing aids 10 or more hours per day have better spoken language outcomes than children who wear their hearing aids fewer hours per day. This is important to keep in mind even if you use sign language with your child in addition to spoken language.

If you have concerns or questions about times when your child should or should not wear their hearing aids, talk with your audiologist.

It is common to experience challenges with hearing aid use for many different reasons.

Challenges can be related to your child. Parents often struggle with knowing what to do when their child repeatedly pulls out their hearing aids. Children pull out their hearing aids for different reasons. Very young children are learning about themselves and their body and will explore and discover their ears and hearing aids. As children get older, they may remove their hearing aids to get attention. If your child's behavior is getting in the way of hearing aid use, there are behavior management strategies you can use to help you address this challenge.

For young children there are a number of strategies you can use to help you keep the hearing aids on your child. Toupee tape can be used to help attach the hearing aids to your child's head.



This keeps the hearing aids from moving around on your child's ear. Thin caps can be used for young children to keep them from pulling the hearing aids out. The cap can be worn at any point of the day that is troublesome, such as riding in the car, or when your child is with a caregiver that is uncomfortable putting the hearing aids back on your child after they are pulled out. Hearing aid headbands can also help keep hearing aids in place. Your audiologist can help you determine effective strategies for you and your child.

If your child's behavior is keeping him or her from wearing the hearing aids, there are behavior management strategies that can help. For example, using a reward, such as a sticker when your child leaves the hearing aids on. Hearing aid use during a fun activity, such as reading, can be helpful. The child can enjoy positive attention and hear what you are saying well. See the behavior management tutorial for an in-depth explanation on behavior management. Knowing the function of your child's behavior is important for finding the right solution.

Parents can experience a variety of challenges that can interfere with their child's hearing aid use. When parents have doubts about their child's hearing loss or the need to use hearing aids, they may be less likely to put the hearing aids on their child. Parents can experience fears such as worrying about what others may think of their child, or they may worry about losing the hearing aids. When parents experience depression they are less likely to have their child wear their hearing aids. Another challenge is having confidence in how to manage the hearing aids, for example being comfortable putting the hearing aid back on after the child pulls it out. These challenges also apply to other caregivers.

Addressing barriers that interfere with your consistency is important for your child's language development. It can be helpful to have a routine that includes a structure for when hearing aids are put on each day. For example, if you lay out your child's clothes for the next day, put the hearing aids next to the clothes. Find a routine that works for you and your family, so you remember to put the hearing aids on each morning. If you find yourself struggling with feelings such as being overwhelmed or unsure how to handle the hearing aids, ask for help. Your audiologist, other parents, and the other professionals you work with can help you learn how to become consistent. If you are experiencing doubts or fears about having your child wear the hearing aids, talk with your audiologist to get the information and support you need to move forward.

Problems with the hearing device can also influence hearing aid use. When the earmolds get too small the hearing aid can feedback, that is make a squealing noise. When this happens, it may bother you and/or your child causing you to take out the hearing aids, so the feedback sound stops. If the hearing aid is not functioning properly, even if your child is wearing the hearing aid, their access to sounds can be limited, distorted, or they may have no access at all.

Your child's earmolds will need to be replaced often as your child grows. Make regular appointments with your audiologist to manage earmold replacements. If your child's hearing



aid needs repair, it is important to ask your audiologist for a loaner hearing aid, so your child is able to hear while their hearing aid is getting repaired.