

Patient information factsheet

Tips for keeping hearing aids on young children (aged 12 to 24 months)

We have given you this factsheet because your child has hearing aids. We understand it can be a challenge to keep hearing aids on young children, especially as they begin to explore more with their hands.

This factsheet contains information about the different hearing aid stages children (aged 12 to 24 months) go through and some helpful tips on how to keep your child's hearing aids on. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

Storing your child's hearing aids

When your child is not wearing their hearing aids, you should:

- store the hearing aids safely in a box in a place where you can always find them (for example, in your child's change bag)
- keep the hearing aids out of reach of young children and pets

12 to 18 months

During this age range, it is normal for your child to go through a stage of removing their hearing aids. If this is the case, you should consider what your child is getting out of removing their hearing aids. For example:

- Are they learning a new skill?
- Are they trying to get your attention?
- Are they trying to get you to do the fun thing you did the last time they removed their hearing aids?

Whatever you choose to do in response to your child removing their hearing aids, it is important that you remain calm and try to keep your facial expression as neutral as possible (not showing any emotion). This is because you do not want your child to learn to associate their hearing aids with negative emotions such as anger, frustration or anxiety, as this may make your child want to avoid wearing their hearing aids.

If your child keeps removing or trying to remove their hearing aids, we recommend that you:

- soothe your child's upsets but do not let the hearing aids become a way to get your attention
- try to give your child lots of positive attention in other ways (for example, reading picture or interactive books together, playing with toys together or singing songs with actions)
- have some emergency distractions to hand (for example, a favourite book, toy or snack)

Patient information factsheet

Please note that temperament plays a big role during this period and throughout toddlerhood. Children who are more laid back, have regular schedules and are easy to soothe when they are unhappy are easier to train to leave their hearing aids alone. It can be harder for children who are very active, sensitive to changes or easily upset.

As your child develops their motor skills, it is important for you to teach them that only adults can take their hearing aids off, **not** babies or children.

Ideally, your child should wear their hearing aids all the time while they are awake as they help with brain, language and social development.

Your child does not need to wear their hearing aids at night or during naps, but it is safe if they fall asleep with them in. Please note that if your child does sleep with their hearing aids in, moisture can build up inside the tubing of the hearing aid. This can block sound from getting through the hearing aid. If this happens, we advise using a hearing aid puffer (a small, squeezable bulb with a nozzle that is designed to blow air through hearing aid tubing to remove moisture, condensation, and earwax), if you have one, to remove the moisture. If you have a puffer, we will show you how to use this. If you have any problems removing the moisture, please contact us for advice.

About 20 months

At this age, many children will start to learn how to undress themselves. As part of this learning, your child will likely try to remove all clothing and accessories from their body, including their hearing aids. It is important to note that your child is not removing their hearing aids because they do not want to use them, but because they are practising a new skill. **This stage will take extra time and patience.** Your child should eventually stop removing their hearing aids.

After your child has undressed themselves to the best of their ability, we recommend that you praise them and then put their hearing aids back in and their clothes back on. The novelty of their newfound undressing ability will soon wear off. You should always put your child's hearing aids back in after they have pulled or knocked them out unless you suspect that your child is in pain (for example, you think that they may have an ear infection or a broken hearing aid). If you are concerned that your child is in pain, please contact your child's general practitioner (GP) for advice.

If your child has removed their hearing aids in a temper tantrum, you may need to wait for them to calm down before putting their hearing aids back in. We recommend that you hold your child's hearing aids and wait quietly with a neutral expression on your face while they calm down. When your child is calmer or has gotten tired, you should smile, put their hearing aids back in and then distract them with a game, song or a snack.

During this stage, you may need to start using hearing aid retention accessories or a combination of hearing aid retention accessories to help keep your child's hearing aids in place. For more information about hearing aid retention accessories and examples of these items, please see the next section.

Hearing aid retention accessories

You can find a wide range of accessories online that can help to keep hearing aids on young children. However, it is important to note that every child is different. Something that helps one child may irritate another.

We have found that hearing aid retention accessories are typically most helpful for children aged 12 months and older who like to remove their hearing aids. However, many children manage well without any accessories.

Hearing aid retention accessories can include:

- toupee tape or wig tape
- hearing aid retention clips
- hearing aid caps
- hearing aid retention bands (also known as hearing aid headbands or suspenders)
- hearing aid retention loops for glasses (if your child wears glasses and hearing aids)

Ask your child's audiologist for more information about these accessories. Hearing aid caps, retention bands and loops can be purchased online from several retailers. You can find these by searching online.

Please note that crochet or mesh fabric hearing aid headbands and caps may work best for your child, as sound can pass through the material better.

Further support

Keeping hearing aids on young children can be challenging. For additional support, please visit the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) website (see 'Useful links' section on page 4) or ask your child's audiologist to provide you with details for a specialist teacher advisor.

We have also included some tips below that you and your family may find helpful.

- Meet with other families and children with hearing loss, especially if your child has a long-term hearing loss. Ask your child's specialist teacher advisor for contacts and suitable play meetings.
- Introduce your child to toys, dolls, books and stories which feature characters with hearing aids.
- Encourage your child to play with toys that have hearing aids. You can find a variety of teddies and dolls that wear hearing aids online.
- Give your child a toy medical kit to play with so that they can look inside the ears of their teddies and dolls (it may also help your child to have a look inside your ears).
- Learn some signs to support communication with your child with and without their hearing aids. This can be handy for bath times and any other occasions when your child is not wearing their hearing aids. Ask your child's specialist teacher advisor about resources for this if you are interested.

Patient information factsheet

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

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Useful links

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

www.ndcs.org.uk

www.ndcs.org.uk/advice-and-support/all-advice-and-support-topics/hearing-aids-implants-and-assistive-technology/hearing-aids-and-implants/keeping-hearing-aids-and-implants-babies-and-toddlers

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