

Keeping Children's Hearing Devices on

Eyes open, technology on: supporting a child to consistently wear their hearing devices during all waking hours is a challenge faced by many families. Yet, we know that maximum benefit from devices such as hearing aids or cochlear implant processors can only be achieved if they are being worn as often as possible.

Why is it important?

A child's brain development is most rapid between birth and three years old.¹ This is why it's important that children can hear and develop their auditory system as early as possible.

The ultimate goal is for the child to wear their device during all waking hours – enabling them to access crucial auditory information throughout the day.

Learning to speak does not only happen in formal situations, but also takes place incidentally throughout the day. If a child goes through periods without their hearing devices, they miss out on these essential learning opportunities. Consistent use of hearing devices from a young age is key, so they can pick up crucial sounds, conversations and incidental language throughout the day.

Tips for keeping hearing devices on

Infants and toddlers are actively exploring their environment and may try to remove their hearing devices throughout the day. Even kindy-aged children may remove their hearing aids or cochlear implants as part of a power struggle with parents or carers, especially during a temper tantrum.

- **Stay calm:** At around six months old, babies start to explore more and pull their hearing aids or cochlear implants off. If this happens, stay calm and replace the device as quickly as possible.
- **Put the device away temporarily:** If the child keeps pulling the hearing device off, or if replacing it turns into a struggle, try putting the hearing device safely away for 10 minutes and then try again – but don't forget about them. This helps avoid them learning to get attention by pulling the hearing devices off again and again.
- **Distraction:** When replacing the hearing device, attempt to distract them by singing or playing with toys – make it a positive experience.
- **A simple explanation:** For an older child, explain to them why it is important to “keep your ears on” so they can hear their friends talking to them, stories and songs and learn new things.
- **Check the fit:** Ensure their hearing aids and moulds fit comfortably, as any discomfort can also limit use.
- **Normalise wearing devices:** Make pretend hearing aids or cochlear implants for your child's toys or show them photos of other children wearing hearing technology, to help them want to wear their devices.

Helping a child to keep their hearing devices on is a team effort and requires consistency across all parties involved.

Please contact us or speak directly with your Audiologist or Listening and Spoken Language Specialist for further information.

¹Flexer, C. (2017). Start with the brain and connect the dots: supporting children who are deaf or hard of hearing to develop literacy through listening and spoken language [White paper]. <https://www.hearandfirst.org/b/blog/posts/connecting-the-dots-between-basic-brain-biology-and-literacy>

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