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Hearing Aids FAQ

Read this page to find answers to some common questions about hearing aids.

How hearing aids can help

Q. What should I expect from a hearing aid?

A. This depends on how much your child can hear:

- For children with mild to moderate hearing loss:
 - Hearing aids make talking loud enough so they can hear some or all of the sounds.
- For children with severe to profound hearing loss:
 - These children may not hear all the sounds of talking equally well. A hearing aid can help these children know when someone is talking.



Q. How does an audiologist know what kind of hearing aid to prescribe?

A. The audiologist tries to get an aid that will make spoken words clearer and easier to understand for your child. She or he does that based on your child's hearing tests. The audiologist tries to match how loud the hearing aid can make sound to your child's hearing loss.

Q. How can I tell if my child hears well with her hearing aids?

A. First, watch for signs that your child hears things:

- Does she turn her head when you call her name?
- Does she turn toward other sounds, like a dog barking?
- Does she look to see where sounds are coming from?
- Does she blink, cry or react in some way to loud sounds? (This is for very young children.)

Second, ask your audiologist to test your child's hearing with the aids on. The audiologist can measure the sound in the ear canal when the aids are turned on. This is called a **real-ear analysis**.

Q. Why do some children wear 2 hearing aids and others only 1?

A. Wearing 2 hearing aids is usually best. Here's why:

- It helps you hear people talking in a noisy room better.
- It helps balance the sound that you hear.
- Being able to hear in both ears helps you tell where the sounds are coming from.

Sometimes a child has better hearing in 1 ear than the other. That child can still wear an aid in the second ear.

Some children don't wear aids in both ears because of other ear problems, like:

- Having narrow ear canals
- A torn eardrum
- Middle ear disease

How much hearing aids cost, and paying for them

Q. How much do hearing aids cost?

A. Hearing aids can cost from \$1,000 to \$4,000 per aid. Different kinds of aids can cost more or less than others:

- Non-programmable, linear behind-the-ear aids cost the least.
- Programmable aids are in the middle range of prices.
- Digital programmable aids are usually the most expensive.

But the costs can overlap a lot.

You may have to pay for the earmolds separately. Earmolds cost from \$30 to \$60 each.

Q. Can I get help in paying for my child's hearing aids?

A. Yes, but the help you can get is different in each state:

- Call your insurance company to see if they cover hearing aids. Some private insurance companies cover hearing aids, ear molds and even FM systems for children. Most don't.
- Medicaid covers hearing aids for people who can get Medicaid.
- Some private groups can help you get hearing aids.

Ask your audiologist who to call for help in paying for hearing aids.

Learn more about where to get help on these websites:

- [Assistance for hearing aids and cochlear implants](http://deafness.about.com/cs/hearingaids/a/haidcost.htm) (<http://deafness.about.com/cs/hearingaids/a/haidcost.htm>) from about.com lists some groups that can help you.
- [Where to get help](http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/548.html) (<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/548.html>) from the National Deaf Education Network and Clearinghouse tells you where to go for help.

Q. Should we get insurance for our child's hearing aids?

A. All new hearing aids are covered for 1 year for one-time loss or damage. That means if you lose or break them in the first year, they will be replaced 1 time.

Many families get more insurance for hearing aids. This may cover loss and damage after the first year. Ask your insurance company if they will cover hearing aids.

Check out these websites for more information:

- [Midwest Hearing Industries \(http://www.mwhi.com/\)](http://www.mwhi.com/)
- [ESCO \(http://www.earserv.com/\)](http://www.earserv.com/)

Different kinds of hearing aids

Q. What kind of hearing aid is best for children?

A. There are two main kinds of hearing aids:

- Behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids
- In-the-ear (ITE) hearing aids

Children usually wear behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids. Here's why:

- **BTEs come with soft, flexible earmolds.**
As your child grows, the size and shape of her ear canal changes. BTEs let you replace the earmold without replacing the whole hearing aid.
- **You can use a BTE with an FM system easily.**
- **ITEs and smaller aids are better for adults or teenagers.** Their ear canals don't change size or shape so much. ITEs especially help people with milder hearing loss.

Q. How do digital hearing aids work?

A. Sound reaching the microphone is changed into a digital form using a computer microchip inside the hearing aid. The hearing aid then makes the signal stronger. It also changes the signal back into sounds that the listener can identify as speech.

Digital aids can give people a "cleaner" sound. This means that there's no background hum from the hearing aid's amplifier. Digital aids can be programmed to cut down on background noise in other ways.

Q. What are programmable hearing aids?

A. Programmable hearing aids are the most flexible kind of hearing aid. **Programmable** means the hearing aids can have different settings, or programs. They can be set for a noisy classroom or for a quiet conversation. They can also be set just for your child's type of hearing loss. There are both behind-the-ear and in-the-ear programmable aids.

Programmable hearing aids have a place for connecting to the audiologist's computer. This is called the programming port. The audiologist can adjust the intensity (gain) for soft and moderate sounds in a few minutes. Programmable aids may have linear or digital amplification.

Assistive Listening Devices

Q. Does my child need an FM system?

A. FM systems help many children. An FM system lets you move the microphone closer to the person who's speaking. On hearing aids, the microphone is near the child's ear.

In the classroom, the teacher might wear the microphone. From the microphone, her voice goes to a receiver. The receiver fits on your child's hearing aid. This helps your child hear the teacher's voice better. An FM system also cuts down on background noise.

Taking Care of Hearing Aids

Q. How long does a hearing aid battery last?

A. Hearing aid batteries last about 7 to 10 days. They may last as long as 2 weeks.

Zinc air batteries are best. This is because they have a long shelf life.

You activate a zinc air battery by taking off a paper strip. Once this kind of battery starts losing power, it dies quickly, usually within a day.

The hearing aid may sound unclear or distorted just before the battery dies. Batteries last longer if you turn off the hearing aid every time you're not using it.

Hearing Aid Tips

Q. My child doesn't want to wear her hearing aids. What can I do?

A. Try to be patient! Here are some tips for putting hearing aids on:

- Put the aids on your child when she is relaxed and playful.
- Make sure the child is doing something she likes while wearing the aids.
- Put the aids on when other family members can help you.
- Don't try using the hearing aids in the car at first.
- Try to keep your child's hands busy while she wears the hearing aids. Some things you can do to keep her busy are:
 - Clap a nursery rhyme with your child's hands.
 - Roll a ball. But keep someone else behind your child to keep her from pulling the aids out.
 - Read a story together. Try using a book with flaps that your child can lift up.
 - Have a snack together.
 - Blow bubbles, stack blocks, or anything else you can think of.
- Start out by having your child wear the aids for 5 to 10 minutes. Then gradually add to that time.
 - If she keeps them in for that long, take the aids out and praise your child for listening. Remember that you take the aids out, not your child.
 - If your child can't keep the aids in for that long, take them out and try again later.
 - Work up to having her wear the aids several times for 10 minutes. Then have her wear the aids for 15 to 20 minutes.

During these first sessions, keep the room quiet. Check the hearing aid volume from time to time to make sure they are set right.

Q. What is that whistling noise that my child's hearing aid makes? How can I stop it?

A. That sound is called feedback. It means that the amplified sound from the hearing aid goes back into the microphone of the hearing aid and gets amplified again. Here are some things that may cause feedback:

- Your child's earmold may be too loose. This can let sound leak from the ear canal.
- The hearing aid's tubing may have a hole in it. This can also let sound leak from the ear canal.
- Your child has too much earwax.
- There's a hole in the earmold.
- Your child has an ear infection or fluid in his middle ear. This makes the eardrum stiff. Sound doesn't go through it as easily as it should.

Some people with hearing loss do not hear the feedback.

Try these things to stop feedback:

- Turn the hearing aid volume down.
- Clean the tip of the earmold carefully. Use a wire or a brush.
- Make sure the earmold fits snugly. Check to see no parts are sticking out.

See your audiologist for more help. Earmolds usually need be replaced two or three times a year as your child grows.

Q. How can I keep my child's hearing aids dry?

A. Hearing aids can be hurt by getting wet or from a lot of moisture in the air. Your child's sweat can also hurt his hearing aids. Try these ideas to keep them dry:

- Put the aids in a dehumidifier overnight. You often get a dehumidifier when you buy your first pair of hearing aids.
- Put the hearing aids with the earmolds attached into a small container overnight. Put a pad or some special drying crystals into the container, too. They will help dry the aids.
- Get a small air pump to push wetness out of the earmold. The air pump doesn't cost a lot.
- Remind your child to not wear her hearing aids outside when it's raining a lot.
- Have your child take out the hearing aids and put them in a plastic container when she's not using them.

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You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/hearingaids/faq.jsp>