

Hearing Aids at Primary School

Audiology Information Pack

When your child reaches five years of age, they will usually transition from the under-five Hearing Aid Review clinic to the over-five Hearing Aid Review clinic. As they get older, we will encourage them to become more involved and independent with regards to their hearing aid(s). This information pack has been provided to answer your questions.

Child's name: _____

Name of school: _____

Will my child's appointments be different now?

You may have been coming to the Audiology Department for a number of years, or you may only have started coming for appointments recently. The under-five clinics are held in Audiology 1. The over-five clinics are held in Audiology 2, although you should still book in at reception in Audiology 1 and use the waiting room there. We usually find it necessary to have two clinicians working on the under-five clinics but we find that only one clinician is needed for the over-five clinic.

In the over-five clinic we will begin to encourage your child (with your support) to think together about things such as:

- Does your hearing seem the same or different?
- Are your hearing aids working well?
- Are you hearing well at home and at school?
- Do your earmoulds fit well?
- If you use a radio aid, is it working well?
- Do you have enough batteries at home?
- Do you have any questions, or is there anything you need to tell us?

Every child is different but gradually we will work together to increase the timespan between routine Hearing Aid Review appointments (up to a maximum of one year). As children become more reliable at performing hearing tests and reporting problems with their hearing / hearing aids, it is not necessary to come into clinic as frequently. Of course, if extra appointments are required (if there are specific concerns or new earmoulds are needed, for example) then we will happily arrange this. Please let us know using the contact details at the end of this pack.

Audiology staff

You may have seen a number of different audiologists at your child's appointments. You will meet a few more in the over-five clinics.

Does my child have a Teacher of the Deaf?

Many pupils with hearing aids are visited in school by a Teacher of the Deaf. Often the teacher will change when your child moves to a new school.

Teacher's name: _____

We will share your child's hearing test results and hearing aid settings with your Teacher of the Deaf. S/he will also let us know how your child is getting on at school.

You should let someone know as soon as possible if your child has any problems with their hearing or hearing aids. Your Teacher of the Deaf or the Audiology Team can help.

Your child's hearing

You will hopefully have a good idea of how to describe your child's hearing difficulty to other people (your child's teacher, for example) but let us know if you would like us to clarify anything for you.

It can be helpful for your child to have the ability to explain this too if asked by teachers or other children. We will endeavour to explain your child's hearing test results (and the purpose of the hearing aids) in a child-friendly way during their appointments but please do ask if you would like us to cover this at any particular time.

Your child's hearing aids

Here are some current details about your child's hearing aids which might be a useful record:

Ear	Right	Left
Hearing aid make and model		
Colour		
Earmould		
Tubing		
Battery		
Programs		
Radio aid		
Prescription		

Please note – as children become more confident in using hearing aids themselves, it may be appropriate to add a volume control or different programs (settings) to the aids. This is sometimes very useful if a child's hearing tends to fluctuate, for example. If you would like any more details or if you think your child might benefit from additional settings please ask an audiologist.

Helping my child to look after their hearing aids

At primary school your child should be encouraged and supported to become more confident looking after their own hearing aids. Children show an interest in their hearing aids at different ages but gradually teaching them the following skills will help ensure that they are always hearing as well as possible.

Here are some ideas:

1. Can your child recognise when their hearing aid is not working?
2. Does your child know who to approach if there is a problem with their aid?
3. Does your child know how to turn their aids on and off?
4. Can your child insert their own hearing aids?
5. Does your child know how to care for their hearing aid?
6. Can your child change their own hearing aid batteries?

1. Can your child recognise when their hearing aids are not working?

Wearing a hearing aid that has no output is like wearing an earplug. It is worth spending some time checking that your child understands when their aids are working well and when they are is not making any sound. No output could simply mean that the aids are not switched on or that the batteries are flat. If the common faults (see page 10) have been checked it might mean that the aids need to be repaired. The quicker a child can recognise that their aids are not working and alert an adult, the quicker the problem can be rectified.

Many parents are in the habit of changing their child's hearing aid batteries once a week but as children become more skilled in reporting problems they should also be taught to recognise that their aid will make a beeping sound in their ear ("beep, beep, beep") when the battery needs changing. (Note – you may not hear this sound externally.) The aids will continue to work for a short time after the first series of beeps but it is worth changing the batteries as soon as possible.

2. Does your child know who to approach if there is a problem with their aids?

Some children are more confident than others in reporting problems with their aids. It is important that you check with them each morning that everything seems to be working well.

It is also very important that your child knows exactly who they should approach if there is a problem (e.g. if an aid falls out and needs to be re-inserted or if the battery is flat). Talk with your child's class teacher at the start of term and make sure everyone has agreed who will help if your child asks.

3. Does your child know how to switch their aids on and off?

Children usually learn to take their hearing aids out themselves at quite an early stage and so they can be taught to always switch the aid off after taking them out. This is also useful when they need to take their aid out at bath time or for swimming lessons.

The on/off control on your child's hearing aids is simple to operate and your child will usually be able to learn this skill quite easily. If there is a battery lock on the aids then your child will not be able to switch the aids off by him/herself. Sometimes children like to switch their aids on themselves after they have been inserted by an adult.

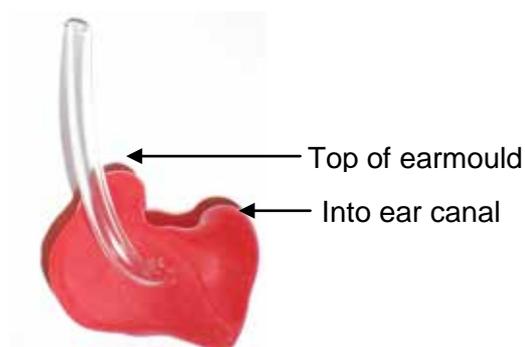
4. Can your child insert their own hearing aids?

It is a good idea to practise this with your child at home when you think they are ready. Usually children learn this process in small stages.

- Children can learn to tuck the hearing aids back behind their ears if they have fallen off. You can encourage them to practise this once you have inserted the earmoulds.
- A next step may be to use their finger to finish pushing the earmoulds in once you have positioned them correctly. Often children can make small adjustments to the earmoulds themselves (especially if they have worn hearing aids for a little while) if they are not quite seated correctly in the ear or if there is some feedback.
- Once a child is ready to try the whole process, the next section describes the best method for inserting the hearing aids.

Concentrate on the earmould first (the hearing aid just loops over the ear once the earmould is in place). Make sure the earmould is inserted correctly in the ear. Incorrect insertion can cause feedback (whistling) and can feel uncomfortable.

- a) Hold the back of the earmould with your finger and thumb and bring the earmould back past the ear in the position it will be when wearing it. It is usually easier for your child to use their right hand for their right ear and their left hand for their left ear. The top of the earmould goes under the fold near the top of the ear. The part which holds the tubing goes down into the ear canal.



- b) Fit the top and canal parts of the mould into the ear. Make sure that the top is tucked under the fold of the ear. Keep hold of the back of the earmould until you have completed this step.



c) Now let go of the back of the earmould and push it into the ear. It may help to pull the ear down and back at the same time.



d) When the earmould is in place, loop the hearing aid over the top and behind the ear.



If the hearing aid is whistling when you let it go, then it may not be correctly inserted.

Differentiating between left and right aids:

To help with insertion, your child needs to be able to tell the difference between right and left aids. If they wish they can clearly mark aids with stickers from their hearing aid pack or earmoulds can be customised to help recognise the difference between right and left.

There are also coloured dots on the back or bottom of each hearing aid:

The right hearing aid will have a red dot.

The left hearing aid will have a blue dot.

5. Does your child know how to care for their hearing aids?

A hearing aid is a precious piece of equipment because it helps your child hear. It needs to be looked after carefully. Your child should be aware of this and you should agree that they will always be put in a safe place when they are not being used (e.g. when your child goes to bed at night). If you do not have one already we can provide a case or 'dri-pot' to keep them in.

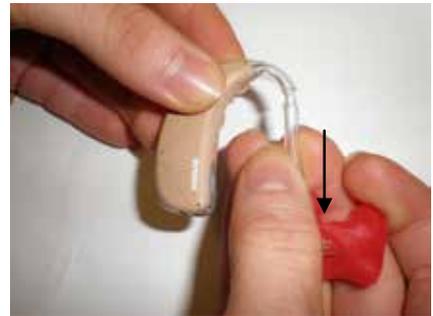
The outer casing of the hearing aid has some water resistance, which protects the working parts of the aid from moisture. However, make sure your child knows that the aids should be taken out for swimming or in the bath or shower.

a) Cleaning the hearing aids

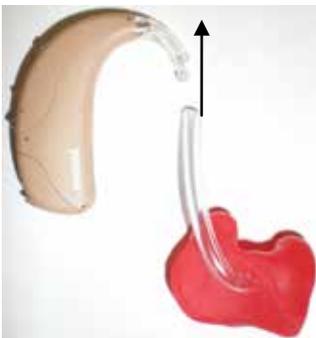
The earmoulds and hearing aids need to be kept clean. Your child can learn to wipe the earmoulds every day with a dry cloth or anti-bacterial wipe (available from the chemist) before putting them into their ears.

The earmoulds will also need to be washed regularly with soap (the kind you would use on your skin) and water. You will probably need to do this together. If your child suffers with frequent ear-infections the earmoulds will need to be soaked regularly in a sterilising solution to prevent the spread of infection.

To wash the earmoulds you need to remove them from the hearing aids. To do this, hold onto the tubing with one hand and the hearing aid in the other and ease the two bits apart, as shown. You may need to pull it fairly hard but this should not damage the hearing aid.



After you have washed the earmoulds, there is likely to be some water remaining in the tubing. You can use the 'puffer' in your care pack to blow any water out of the tubes.



To re-connect the earmoulds and hearing aids match the curve at the back of the ear-mould to the curve of the hearing aid and ease the tubing onto the elbow of the aid, as shown.

Moisture or condensation can build up in the tubes. If this happens you can disconnect the earmoulds and hearing aid and use the puffer to remove the moisture. Some people find that they have moisture present in the tubing of the earmoulds most of the time; special tubing (known as stay-dry tubing) may be used to prevent this.



Ear wax can also block the tubing of the earmoulds causing the sound from the hearing aid to be less clear. This is something that your child can learn to check for. We can provide a brush which has a hook on one end which can be used to remove any wax.

a) Replacing the tubing

The tubing of the earmoulds will need replacing at least every six months, and sometimes more frequently. The tubing in your child's earmoulds may need changing because it has become hard or brittle, it has fallen out of the earmould or because your child suffers with frequent ear infections (regular changing of earmould tubing can reduce the spread of infection). If the tubing frequently falls out of your child's earmould a tubing lock can be fitted to anchor it in place.

An audiologist or Teacher of the Deaf will be able to change the tubing of the earmoulds for you. They will also be able to show you how to do it if you would like them to. If this is the case we can provide spare tubing for you to keep at home.

Changing tubing requires the use of sharp scissors and therefore we do not recommend that children do this, although they can watch you so that they learn for when they are older.

b) Drying the hearing aids

Make sure your child is aware that their hearing aids should never be put in water. If your child's hearing aids get damp (this often happens more in the summer time or when taking part in sports) then it is important to dry them out overnight. We can provide 'dri-pots' which your child can put their hearing aids into each night when they go to bed. If hearing aids are not dried properly they could become intermittent (meaning they could work well for some of the time but not all of the time).

6. Can your child change their hearing aid batteries?

The hearing aid batteries may fail whilst your child is wearing their hearing aids. It is important to encourage your child to tell a grown-up when this happens (you when they are at home or the designated person you have previously agreed when they are at school). The hearing aids will beep in the ear when the batteries are low. Help them to associate the beeps with the fact that the hearing aids have stopped working.

Some schools are not keen for younger children to keep batteries in their own possession because of the risk of other children swallowing these. If this is the case, the school should be happy to keep batteries in a safe place so that your child can ask for the batteries to be changed. When your child is ready, they should be allowed to change the batteries themselves at school under supervision.

When teaching your child to change the batteries themselves:

- 1) Sit down with the hearing aids on a table or flat surface in case they are dropped.
- 2) Take the old batteries out and put them in a safe place (for recycling*).
- 3) Pull the sticker off the new batteries and leave them to rest for a couple of minutes.
- 4) Place the new batteries in the battery drawers (flat positive '+' side up).
- 5) Close the drawers (if the drawers do not close easily, the batteries may be upside down).
- 6) Re-insert the hearing aids to check they are now working.

New batteries:

Batteries can be collected Monday - Friday from 8.30am - 5pm from Audiology 1 or 2 receptions or at your local GP surgery reception during their opening hours. You will be asked for a battery card which should be given to you when your child's hearing aids are fitted and details which batteries they need. Batteries can be posted to you if you contact the Audiology Department to request them. Teachers of the Deaf also carry supplies of batteries with them when they visit your child in school.

** Hearing aid batteries should not be thrown away with normal household rubbish because the metals inside them pollute the environment. If you store used batteries safely at home and hand them in to us at your appointments we will ensure that they are recycled safely. The batteries can also be taken to local recycling collection points (often in shops).*

Are my child's hearing aids faulty?

Sometimes a hearing aid becomes faulty or may appear to be faulty. Here is a list of common problems and things to check. It is a good idea to involve your child in this process. If you are unable to solve the problem yourself and a hearing aid is still not working properly it may need to be sent for repair.

No sound from a hearing aid:

- Check that the hearing aid is switched on properly.
- Try a new battery.
- The earmould tubing may be blocked by ear wax. If this is the case, you can attempt to remove it using a small brush or washing the earmould in water. If this does not work, try changing the tubing if you know how.
- The earmould tubing maybe blocked by condensation. If this is the case, use a 'puffer' to dry the tubing.
- The hearing aid may be damaged or faulty. If you think this is the case, contact Audiology for advice.

Sound from a hearing aid is not clear or sounds distorted:

- The battery may be weak. Try replacing the battery with a new one.
- Check that the earmould is inserted properly and that it is not too small.
- The hearing aid may be damaged or faulty. If you think this is the case, contact Audiology for advice.

Sound from a hearing aid is not as loud as normal:

- Check that the earmould is inserted properly and that it is not too small.
- The earmould tubing may be blocked by ear wax. If this is the case, you can attempt to remove it using a small brush or washing the earmould in water. If this does not work, try changing the tubing if you know how.
- The earmould tubing may be blocked by condensation. If this is the case, use a 'puffer' to dry the tubing.
- There could be a lot of wax in your child's ears, or they might need a new hearing test. If you think this is the case, contact Audiology for advice.

Feedback (whistling) from a hearing aid:

- Check that the earmould is inserted properly and that it is not too small.
- If you think a new earmould is required, contact Audiology for advice.

What are my responsibilities?

You are responsible for taking good care of your child's hearing aids. Adults are expected to pay for replacement hearing aids when theirs are lost or broken so it is very important to get into good habits as soon as possible. Money that has to be used on providing replacement aids for children could compromise the service we are able to offer in the future.

It is also important that you attend all appointments we arrange for your child. Too many appointments are wasted when people do not turn up. We ask that you please let us know if you need to rearrange your appointment so that we can use the time to see someone else instead. Our contact details are given below.

How to contact Paediatric Audiology

To change an existing appointment, ask a question or talk to an Audiologist you should contact:

Audiology 1, Royal Berkshire Hospital, London Road, Reading RG1 5AN

Telephone: **0118 322 7238** Fax: 0118 322 7075

Email: audiology@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/audiology

Unfortunately it is not usually possible to replace a hearing aid if you drop-in without warning, so please do contact us first for advice.

If you would like this leaflet in other languages or formats (e.g. large print, Braille or audio), please contact the Audiology Department.

Department of Audiology, April 2019

Review due: April 2021