

# Treatment Efficacy Summary



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION

## Hearing Aids for Infants and Children

Permanent hearing loss in childhood interferes with the normal development of speech perception and production, language, literacy skills, and social-emotional development. Hearing aids that amplify speech clearly and comfortably provide a highly effective form of intervention, along with family counseling and communication therapy.

Four infants per 1,000 are born with hearing loss, while up to 12% of all newborns are at risk for hearing loss. At risk indicators include such factors as family history of hearing loss, low birth weight, use of ototoxic medications, and craniofacial anomalies. The identification of hearing loss and intervention in early infancy is known to significantly reduce its impact on speech and language production and educational achievement.<sup>i</sup> Hearing aid amplification is a critical element of this intervention and it has helped many children to overcome the effects of hearing loss on speech, language, and literacy and achieve at performance levels commensurate with their normally hearing peers. Children whose hearing loss is identified by 3 months and who start intervention by 6 months have the same language abilities as their peers by the time they enter kindergarten.

The timely and accurate fitting of hearing aids to infants and children is one of the most important responsibilities of the audiologist. The audiologist selects, fits, and evaluates all forms of amplification devices for infants and children including personal hearing aids, FM systems,

and other assistive listening devices. Audiologists have the knowledge and experience required for the hearing assessment and auditory management of infants and children with hearing loss and the full array of sophisticated instrumentation necessary for use with contemporary pediatric hearing assessment procedures and hearing aid selection and evaluation methods. Best practice guidelines for pediatric hearing aid fitting are well established within the profession.<sup>ii</sup> The speech-language pathologist is involved with aspects of communication including receptive and expressive language, speech production, voice characteristics, lipreading, and listening skills.

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<sup>i</sup> Moeller, M. (2000). Early intervention and language development in children who are deaf and hard of hearing. *Pediatrics*, 106 (3), 1–9.

<sup>ii</sup> Pediatric Working Group. (1996). Amplification for infants and children with hearing loss. *American Journal of Audiology*, 5 (1), 53–68.