



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION

AUDIOLOGY

Information Series

Children and Hearing Aids

When can a child be fit with hearing aids?

Infants as young as 4 weeks old can be fit with hearing aids and assistive devices.

Why are early identification and early intervention for hearing loss so important?

Hearing is critical for the development of speech, language, communication skills, and learning. The earlier that hearing loss is diagnosed and intervention (including hearing aids) is started, the more likely it is that your child will avoid delays in these important developmental areas. Research indicates that children identified with a hearing loss who begin services before 6 months old develop language (spoken or signed) similar to their hearing peers.

What is early intervention?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that children who have a hearing loss receive free, appropriate early intervention programs from birth to age 3 and throughout the school years (ages 3–21). Early intervention services for infants and toddlers are family-centered and involve multidisciplinary services.

Early intervention services are provided either through your local school system or through your local health department, depending on the state in which you live. Check with your early intervention service coordinator to see if your child qualifies for early intervention and what is covered.

Ask your child's audiologist or doctor how best to locate the early intervention program in your community.

Who pays for children's hearing aids?

There are various options available to assist in funding for your child's hearing aids. Some private health care plans may cover the cost. Be sure to check with your health insurance company or your employer's benefits manager to find out.

Medicaid must cover the cost of hearing aids and associated services for children who qualify. The early

intervention program will help you apply for Medicaid and other funding plans you may be eligible for. The early intervention program may also provide some coverage for audiology services.

Additionally, there are a number of funding sources available. Go to www.asha.org and search using "Funding for Hearing Aids" for a complete list.

What kind of hearing aid is best for children?

It is important to work with your audiologist and early intervention team to evaluate your child's needs. The hearing aids that are chosen for your child must be easy to handle and monitored by parents and caregivers.

Hearing aids will need to be adjusted and fine-tuned as more detailed information is obtained about your child's hearing loss.

One must also remember that as children grow, their ears grow too. This requires frequent and regularly scheduled changes of earmolds.

Finally, in educational and home settings, children frequently connect their hearing aids to assistive listening systems. So, the hearing aids should have the special features (telecoil and direct audio input capability) that allow for this connection.

The behind-the-ear hearing aid is the type of hearing aid most commonly used with children. Why?

- It can use different earmold styles.
- The earmold can be removed and can be easily remade as the child grows.
- The earmold can be easily cleaned.
- It is easy to handle.
- Controls are easy to see and easily checked and adjusted by parents.
- Parents and caregivers can easily do a listening check.
- It can be fit to benefit many types of hearing losses.

NOTES:

For more information about hearing loss, hearing aids, or referral to an ASHA-certified audiologist, contact the:



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