



Appendix A

Hearing aids

A hearing aid is a small piece of equipment that makes sounds louder. Many people think that a hearing aid will cure a child's hearing problem and make him hear sounds like other people do. This is not true. Hearing aids only make sounds louder. They do not fix any other problem. For more about different kinds of hearing loss, see Chapter 5, starting on page 47.

Hearing aids can be worn in one or both ears, depending on the kind of hearing loss a child has. They can help a child who hears some sounds to hear sounds better. If a child cannot hear **any** sounds, a hearing aid will probably not help.

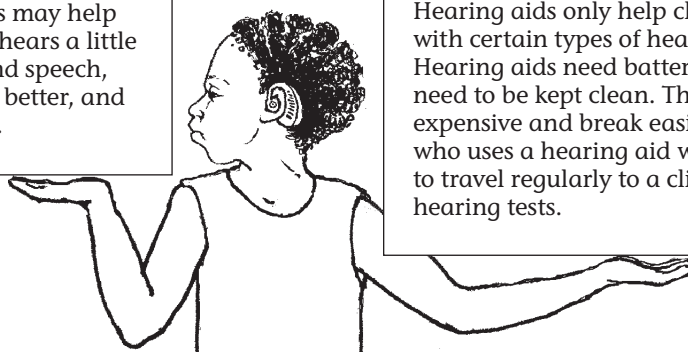
Is a hearing aid right for my child?

BENEFITS

Hearing aids may help a child who hears a little to understand speech, hear sounds better, and speak better.

DIFFICULTIES

Hearing aids only help children with certain types of hearing loss. Hearing aids need batteries and need to be kept clean. They are expensive and break easily. A child who uses a hearing aid will need to travel regularly to a clinic for hearing tests.



A hearing aid will only work well if it fits a child's ear exactly. The earmold (the part that fits in the ear) is made from impressions of the outer ear, and no two ears are the same. In young children, the earmold must be checked at least twice a year. It must be replaced as a child's ear grows and changes shape.

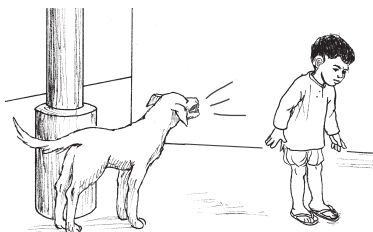
WHAT HEARING AIDS CAN DO

The benefits of a hearing aid depend on the kind of hearing loss a child has.



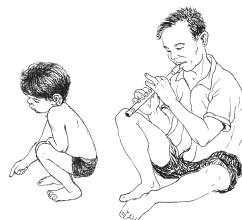
- If a child can hear some sounds, a hearing aid will help her hear sounds that are too soft for her to hear by herself.
- If a child can hear faint speech sounds, a hearing aid will make speech louder, and may help her hear what others say. This can also help a child learn to speak.

- If a child can hear some sounds, a hearing aid may alert him to sounds that warn about danger.

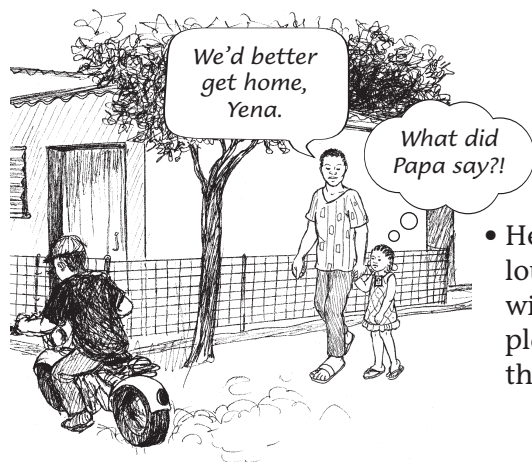


WHAT HEARING AIDS CANNOT DO

- If a child cannot hear any sounds of a certain pitch (see Chapter 5), a hearing aid will not help him hear those kinds of sounds.



This child cannot hear high-pitch sounds, no matter how loud they are. A hearing aid will not help him hear the flute.

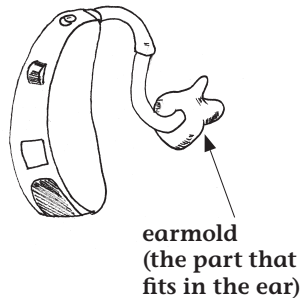


- Hearing aids make all sounds louder. This means a hearing aid will not help someone in a noisy place hear people more clearly than other noises.

Types of hearing aids

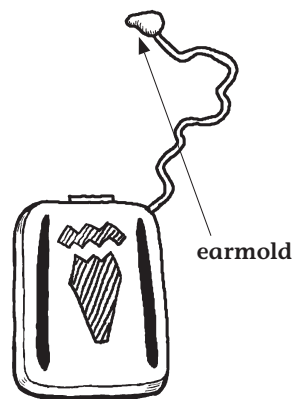
Here are 2 of the most common hearing aids that children use:

Behind-the-ear (BTE) aid



This is how a child wears a BTE aid.

Body aid



This is how a child wears a body aid.

At one school for deaf children in India, all children wear the hearing aids in a harness on the chest. The harness is on the chest so the microphones can help the child hear his own voice. The harness is made of thick cotton cloth, to reduce noise from cloth. The microphones of the hearing aid are kept in pockets. These pockets are tight (to reduce cloth noise) and they keep the microphone visible.

If a child can use a hearing aid, it is best for the child to begin wearing the aid as soon as possible. This way he can get used to hearing sounds and start learning what they mean. To get the most help from his hearing aid, he should wear it all the time, except when he is bathing or sleeping.

Babies can begin wearing hearing aids when they are as young as 3 months old.

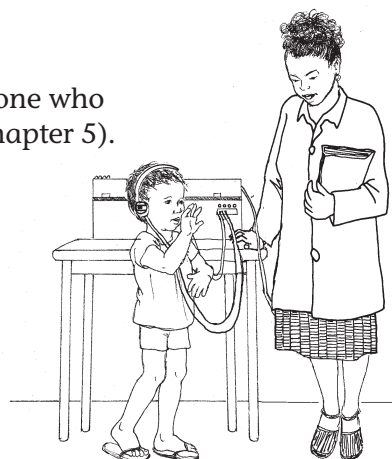


Is a hearing aid a good choice for your family?

If you are trying to decide whether a hearing aid is right for your child, you must think about:

- where your child will get hearing tests
- how much a hearing aid will cost

Your child's hearing must be tested by someone who is trained and has testing equipment (see Chapter 5). Information from the test is used to set the hearing aid so it will make sounds the right loudness for your child. He will need to be tested every year.



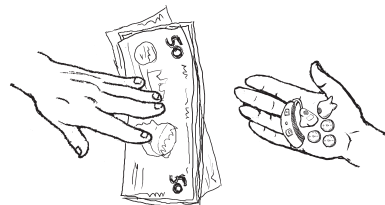
Here are some questions to consider:

Can we afford the testing?

Testing can be expensive. Some places, however, offer testing free or at low cost.

Can we afford a hearing aid, and new earmolds and batteries?

Hearing aids are expensive to begin with, but buying the aid is not the only cost. A child between the ages of 2 and 6 will need a new earmold about every 6 months because his ears are growing fast. The earmold **must** fit well, otherwise the hearing aid will not work correctly.



Getting new earmolds and batteries can be very costly.

In some places, the government may have programs to give free or low-cost hearing aids to all children who need them. Try contacting the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, or a school for the deaf. But such programs are not available everywhere.

You may need new batteries every week or every couple of months. How often you need new batteries depends on how many hours each day your child wears his hearing aid, the type of hearing aid he has, and the kind of batteries he uses. Some countries provide them free.

Hearing aids and batteries should be available to all children who can benefit from them, not just to families who can afford them!



Can we check the hearing aid every day and take care of it?

Hearing aids need to be checked every morning to make sure the batteries and the aid are working well. The earmolds also need to be washed and dried regularly so that dirt will not block sound from getting to the ear.

And hearing aids must be handled carefully. If the aid gets wet, or is dropped, it may break or need repair.

If you decide to get a hearing aid

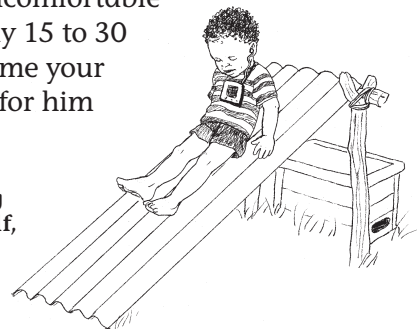
If you decide a hearing aid is right for your child, be sure that you receive information along with the aid so you can learn:

- how to help your child get used to wearing a hearing aid
- how to care for the hearing aid
- how to check the aid each day to be sure it is working
- what to do when the aid does not work well

► Ways to help your child get used to wearing a hearing aid

Every child reacts differently to wearing hearing aids. Some children like them right away, some children find them uncomfortable at first. At first, put the hearing aid on for only 15 to 30 minutes. Gradually increase the amount of time your child wears the aid. It may take many weeks for him to get used to wearing it.

If your child wears the hearing aid while he is enjoying himself, it is less likely to bother him.



Start using the hearing aid in a quiet environment to help your child become aware of the new sounds she can hear. Help her notice sounds by bringing your child closer to the sound or point the sound out to her.

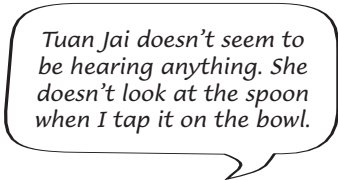


► **How to know if your child is hearing new sounds**

Do not expect your child to react to sounds immediately. Your child will have to learn to be aware of sounds after his hearing aid is put on. Children's reaction to sound depends on their age and how much they can hear.

You may have to watch carefully to see your child's reactions. She may:

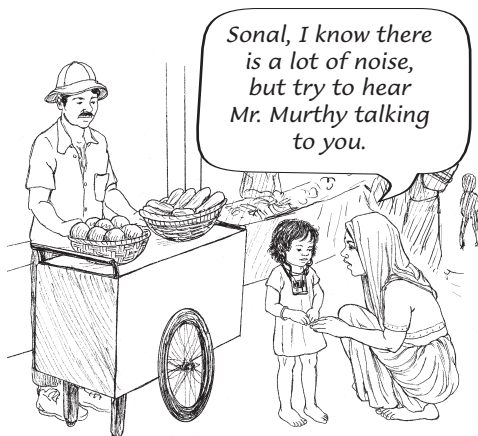
- blink her eyes or stop what she is doing.
- enjoy playing with toys that make noise.
- cry when she hears a sound.
- look up or turn around when she hears a sound.



It may be weeks or months before you see your child react to sound.



► **Help your child understand the new sounds she is hearing**



Even if a hearing aid helps your child hear sounds, she may not understand the sounds she is hearing right away. Your child will need practice listening to sounds with the hearing aid. See Chapter 6 for activities to help your child listen.

At first, she may find it uncomfortable to hear sounds, because she is used to living in a quieter world.

How to take care of hearing aids

With regular care, hearing aids will last longer, and give good sound.

Here are some tips to get better service from a hearing aid

- Keep the hearing aid far away from electrical equipment such as refrigerators and televisions.
- Do not let it get very hot or very cold.
- Keep it dry—sweat or water will damage it. During the day, remove it and wipe off any sweat or moisture. Remove the hearing aid before bathing, swimming, or when out in the rain. At night, put the hearing aid in a container with silica gel (a material that absorbs moisture). Do not use perfumes or any sort of spray on the hearing aid.

Cleaning

- Use a soft dry cloth to clean it. Never use any cleaning fluid.

Earmold

- Check for wax in the earmold regularly.
- Clean the ear mold with warm water.

Battery

- To make the battery last longer, turn the hearing aid off when it is not being used.
- Keep the battery clean, and remove it when the hearing aid is not being used for a length of time—for example, when a child sleeps at night.
- Change the battery regularly. To check if it is time to change the battery, turn the sound to the highest setting. If whistling is heard, the battery is okay. If not, it is time to get a new battery. If the battery loses power faster than usual, it may be a sign of a problem with the hearing aid.
- Store batteries in a cool, dry place. Bring a battery that has been kept in the refrigerator to room temperature before using.

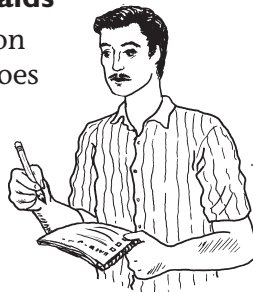


Try to have the hearing aid checked at a hearing aid clinic or store periodically.

Hearing aids may need repair. Usually hearing aid repair can be done only in big cities. But deaf organizations have started training deaf people to take ear impressions, to make earmolds, and to repair hearing aids.

Common problems and solutions for hearing aids

Use this list to help you to check and fix some common problems with hearing aids. If the hearing aid still does not work, it may need to be repaired.



If the hearing aid is “dead”

- Is it turned on? Switch on.
- Is the battery dead or weak? Replace battery.
- Is the battery inserted properly? Check that + and – signs on battery match those on hearing aid.
- Is the cord broken? Replace cord.
- Is the ear mold blocked? Clean blockage in ear mold.
- Did water get into the hearing aid? Remove battery, wipe clean, and put in case with silica gel.

If the sound is not loud enough

- Is the battery low? Replace battery.
- Is the sound set too low? Turn sound louder.
- Are the ear molds loose? Insert carefully.
- Is the ear mold blocked? Clean blockage in ear mold.
- Is there lots of ear wax in the ear? Clean ear wax (see page 199).
- Did the child’s hearing change? Check hearing.

If bothersome noises come and go

- Is the battery low? Replace battery.
- Is the cord broken? Replace cord.

If there is a “frying” noise

- Is the battery low? Replace battery.

If the sound is not clear, or is distorted

- Is the battery low? Replace battery.
- Is the cord broken? Replace cord.
- Is the microphone covered by clothes? Expose microphone.
- Is the microphone covered with dust? Clean with soft cloth or brush.