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Hearing Aids

Read this page and follow the links to find out if hearing aids are right for your child.

What hearing aids are

Hearing aids are devices that make sounds louder. This is called **amplification** (**am-ply-fi-KAY-shun**).

People of all ages wear hearing aids, even babies. Learn [how hearing aids work](http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/work.asp) (<http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/work.asp>) on the "My Baby's Hearing" website.

How hearing aids can help

After testing, here's what your audiologist can tell you:

- If your child needs hearing aids.
- What kind of hearing aid is best for your child.
 - The more severe a child's hearing loss is, the stronger the hearing aid he will need.



How much the hearing aid helps depends on how well your child can hear without it:

- **Mild hearing loss**
Hearing aids may help a child hear and understand what other people say.
- **Moderate hearing loss**
Hearing aids may help a child hear more, but the child still may not understand everything.
- **Severe or profound hearing loss**
Hearing aids may only let him hear when people talk loudly. The child may still have trouble understanding what people say.

Learn more about how your audiologist will fit and test your child's hearing aids at [Hearing Aid Choices](http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/evaluated.asp) (<http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/evaluated.asp>).

Which kinds of hearing aids there are

Hearing aids are divided by how they're worn:

Behind-the-ear (BTE)

- The hearing aid hooks over your outer ears.
- A soft, flexible piece called an earmold fits into the ear. The earmold directs sound to the ear canal.
- Babies and young children usually wear BTE aids because:
 - As your child grows, the size of his ears will change. But you can change the earmold without having to get a whole new hearing aid.
 - The earmold is easy to clean.
 - Parents can easily check and change the settings on BTE hearing aids.

In-the-ear (ITE)

- ITE hearing aids fit into the ear with nothing on the outside.
- If the size of your ear canal changes, you will need a new hearing aid.
- Older children and teenagers may prefer in-the-ear (ITE) hearing aids.

Hearing aids are also divided by how they work:

Conventional analog hearing aids

- The simplest and cheapest of the 3.
- The audiologist tells the hearing aid company how to set them for your child.

Analog programmable aids

- These hearing aids have a computer chip inside them.
- These hearing aids can be set to work in different places, like a noisy restaurant or a quiet home. You can change the setting depending on where you are.
- These hearing aids cost more than the conventional hearing aids. But since your audiologist can change the settings if your child's hearing loss changes, they may last longer.

Digital programmable aids

- The most expensive of the three kinds.
- These hearing aids can change sound into signals that a computer chip can read.
- The sound from the hearing aid will be clearer than with analog hearing aids.
- They also have better programs for working in different places.

Learn more about the different types of [hearing aids](http://www.asha.org/hearing/rehab/hearing_aids.cfm) (http://www.asha.org/hearing/rehab/hearing_aids.cfm) at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) website.

What to look for when buying hearing aids

Hearing aids are always changing and getting new features. Some of the features you may want are:

- **"T" (telecoil/telephone)** or **"M" (microphone)** switches that let your older child turn off the microphone and turn on an antenna. This lets the hearing aid work well with some telephones.
- **DAI (Direct Audio Input)** lets the hearing aid be plugged into other assistive devices, like an FM system, or into the TV or stereo.

Learn what other special features are out there for hearing aids at the [Hearing Aid Choices](http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/features.asp) (<http://www.babyhearing.org/HearingAmplification/AidChoices/features.asp>) section of the "My Baby's Hearing" website.

Help for paying for hearing aids Hearing aids can be expensive. Here are some things that may help you pay for them:

- Check if your health insurance will pay for them.
- If your child gets Medicaid, it will pay for hearing aids.
- There are also private groups that may help you pay for your child's aids. Find out about them at the [Where to Get Help](http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/548.html) (<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/548.html>) page from the National Deaf Education Network and Clearinghouse.

Learn more about hearing aids

- Find answers to your questions on hearing aids on our [Frequently Asked Questions](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/hearingaids/faq.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/hearingaids/faq.jsp>) page.
- Find out what other parents say about [hearing aids](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/meet/parents/hearingaids.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/meet/parents/hearingaids.jsp>).

This page was last edited on February 3, 2004.

You can find this page online at:
<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/hearingaids/>