



Understanding different aids and devices which are available to help with hearing

There are a number of different aids and devices available which can help with hearing if parents wish to go down this route. Not all aids/devices will be available, appropriate or indicated for every child and your audiologist will be able to advise.

A Hearing Aid is a device which fits in or just behind the ear and is designed to amplify sounds (make sounds louder). Some hearing aids have a body unit that is worn on the body with ear phones in the ear. Most benefit will be gained from hearing aids if they are prescribed as early as possible after a hearing difficulty has been identified, this can be from the very earliest months after birth. They can be readily taken in and out by the parents and child (once s/he is old enough). For children with mild and moderate hearing difficulties, hearing aids can help them access the sounds of speech and a wide range of environmental sounds; children with severe losses will hear most sounds of speech with a hearing aid but not necessarily all sounds and therefore they are likely to rely on lip-reading; children with profound losses will still benefit from hearing aids to enable them to hear some more environmental sounds (this will help with, for example, road safety) but are still unlikely to be able to hear conversational speech adequately with hearing aids.

Some children are unable to wear typical hearing aids as the external part of their ear has not developed properly and instead they may be offered a different type of hearing aid which transmits sound through the bones of the skull. This is known as a Bone-Anchored Hearing Aid.

Cochlear implants may be used for children with very severe or profound hearing difficulties who are not deriving sufficient benefit from hearing aids. A cochlear implant is a device which is surgically implanted into the cochlea (snail-like structure in the inner ear which is responsible for turning sound waves into electrical impulses). This requires a fairly major operation and lifelong follow up for tuning and monitoring. This needs to be carried out by a team of specialist professionals in a Cochlear Implant Centre. The implant stays inside the cochlea and a sound processor sits behind the ear which looks more like a traditional hearing aid. This connects to a transmitter coil which sits on the side of the head with a magnet and sends messages to the implant inside the ear. It is recommended that, for optimum benefit, a cochlear implant should be considered within a child's first year of life. Cochlear implants can give children with very severe/profound hearing difficulties access to speech which they would be unable to get with hearing aids. If there are no complications or

additional difficulties, a child should then be able to learn to speak if this is the preferred communication method.

Radio Aids

A radio aid can be used alongside a hearing aid, bone-anchored hearing aid or cochlear implant. It helps a child hear a person speaking when there is background noise. It consists of a transmitter, worn by the person who is speaking and a receiver which is worn by the child and connects to the hearing aid / implant. The child can still hear other sounds but the sound of the person speaking is amplified more than the background noise.

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