

Let's Talk About...

Hearing aid care

In the first few years of life, hearing is a critical part of kids' social, emotional, and cognitive development. Even a mild or partial hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop speech and language properly. When a child receives a hearing aid, it is important to take care of it to ensure that it continues to work well. By simple maintenance, your child's hearing aid will give them years of reliable service.

How do I make sure my child's hearing aids are working well?

Do a daily check of your child's hearing aids and batteries to make sure your child is hearing well. Babies and young children can't tell you when a battery is dead, if the hearing aid only works sometimes, or if it has distorted sound. Up to half of children's hearing aids don't work well—but you can often fix this easily with a daily check.

Each day, follow these 9 steps:

- 1 Look at the hearing aid for any broken or loose parts.
- 2 Make sure the hearing aid's microphone opening is clean and not damaged.



- 3 Check the hearing aid casing. Are there signs of damage, cracks, splitting, or separation? Does the battery door work well? If there is a tamper-resistant battery door, does it prevent young children from opening it?
- 4 Check the battery with a battery tester after your child has used the hearing aid for a while. Batteries should register "GOOD" or 1.4 volts on the meter. If it registers anything else, replace the battery.
- 5 Put the battery in the hearing aid and turn the aid on.
- 6 If the hearing aid has volume control, check it for problems. Is there any static or silence when you change the volume? Does volume increase as you turn the control up?
- 7 Gently move or tap the sides of the case while you listen. Are there any signs of the hearing aid disrupting sound or otherwise changing? Turn the volume up slowly while saying the following sounds aloud (called the Ling Six Sound test):
 - "mmm" (as in master)
 - "ahhhh" (as in ball)
 - "oooo" (as in boot)
 - "eeee" (as in beet)
 - "shhhh" (as in shoot)
 - "ssss" (as in Sally)
- 8 Check the ear mold. Is the opening clean? Is the tubing soft and moveable? Are there any cracks or rough areas on the tubing or the ear mold?
- 9 Check the switches on the hearing aid. Does the switch move freely? Is there any static when you use the switch?

How do I clean my child's hearing aids?

- Use only a soft cloth to wipe the surface of the hearing aid several times a week. Never put the hearing aid body in water.
- Remove ear wax and particles from the opening of the ear mold with a special cleaning tool from your child's audiologist (hearing doctor) when the mold is out of your child's ear. Be careful not to damage the ear mold.
- If the ear mold needs more cleaning, remove it where the soft tubing connects with the hard plastic hook (see figure 1). Soak the ear mold in a mild warm soap solution. Avoid harsh chemicals like alcohol or dishwasher detergent. Use a small brush, or pick gently until the ear mold is clean.
- Make sure the ear mold and tubing are completely dry before attaching the ear mold to the hearing aid. You can use a bulb-blower (available from your audiologist) to blow air through the tubing. Never use a blow dryer, heater, or microwave to dry your child's hearing aid or ear mold.
- If the hearing aid or ear mold still needs cleaning, see your child's audiologist. Your child should see their audiologist every 6–12 months to have their hearing aid cleaned and checked.

What should I know about hearing aid batteries?

Your child's hearing aid uses zinc-air batteries, which you can buy online, at most grocery stores, or in the electronics section of any discount store. Zinc-air batteries have colored tabs on the back, which are different depending on the battery size.

When you need to change batteries in your child's hearing aids:

- Remove the colored tab right before replacing the battery.
- Allow 1–2 minutes for air to activate the battery after you remove the tab. Then replace the battery.

Do not try to recharge a hearing aid battery unless your child's hearing aids are specially designed to be recharged. Never refrigerate zinc-air batteries.

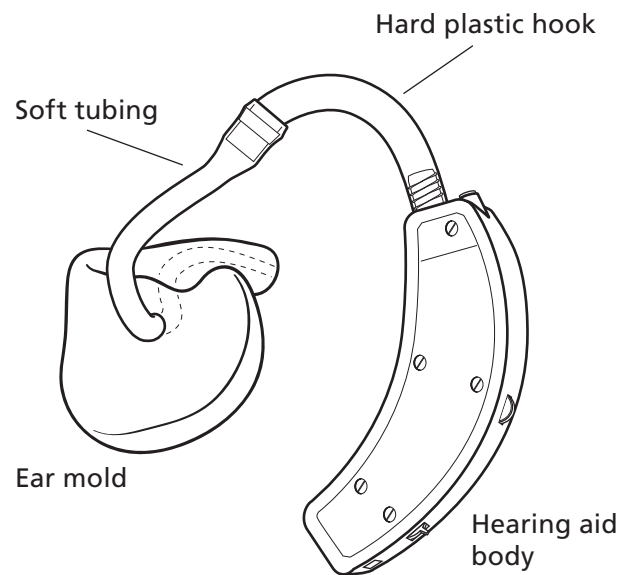


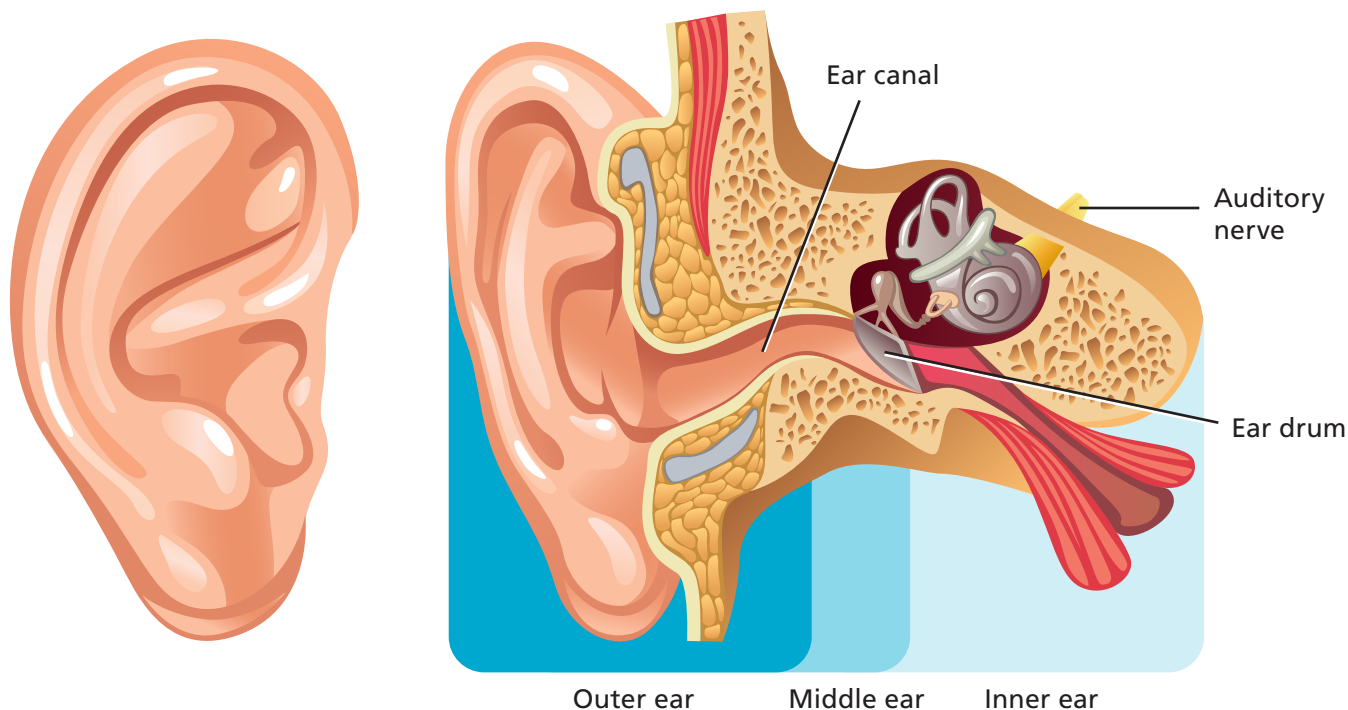
Figure 1

Hearing aids and hearing aid batteries are small enough for young children to put in their mouths and are very harmful if swallowed. To protect your family and your child's hearing aids:

- Make sure your child's hearing aids have a tamper-resistant battery door and volume control. If they don't, talk to your child's audiologist.
- Keep hearing aids and batteries away from young children and animals when your child isn't wearing them.
- Don't carry loose hearing aid batteries with you.
- Immediately call your child's doctor or the poison control center (800.456.7707) if your child swallows a hearing aid battery.

Should I repair my child's hearing aid if it gets damaged?

Do not try to repair your child's hearing aid. Opening the hearing aid may cancel your warranty. Ask your child's audiologist if the hearing aid isn't working, and understand your loss, damage, and hearing aid repair coverage.



How do I protect my child's hearing aids?

- Don't let your child shower, bathe, or swim with hearing aids in.
- Have your child remove their hearing aids over a soft surface like carpet or a towel or pillow in case they drop them. The hearing aids can break on hard surfaces. Store the hearing aids on a soft surface when your child takes them out.
- Keep your child's hearing aids away from too much heat or cold. Never leave a hearing aid near a radiator, in a glove compartment, or on the dashboard of a car.
- Don't use harsh chemicals or cleaners (including rubbing alcohol) on your child's hearing aids, and keep them away from dust and dirt.
- Don't stick pins, paper clips, or anything else into the hearing aid openings. If the openings are blocked, have your child's audiologist check the hearing aids.
- Keep hearing aids away from animals. Dogs and cats are attracted to the odor of hearing aids and may chew and destroy them.
- Don't change the hearing aid batteries or controls in front of children unless you are teaching them. If your child's hearing aid doesn't have a tamper-resistant battery door, tell their audiologist.
- Don't lend your child's hearing aid to anyone. This could damage their hearing.
- Look for yellowing in the ear mold. This is often a signal the tubing should be replaced by your child's audiologist. Hardened and yellow tubes can cause tiny cracks in the tubing, which can allow sound to escape.
- Have your child take their hearing aid out when combing, brushing, or drying their hair.
- Take out the hearing aids when your child puts hair spray, gel, or oil in their hair. They can put the hearing aids back in when the hair products dry.
- Protect the hearing aids from too much moisture. If moisture or sweat are a problem, talk to your child's audiologist.

What if I have questions about my child's hearing aids?

If you have questions about your child's hearing aids, call Primary Children's Hospital audiology department (801) 662.EARS (3277).

