

# Hearing Device Retention Accessory Information

Hearing aid retention accessories not included below were rated as less effective.

More information on survey results and strategies can be found at <http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/hearing-aids-on>  
Ratings based on the results of the Children's Hearing Aid Retention Survey completed by 286 parents (Anderson & Madell, 2012).

## Ear Gear



*Spandex sleeve slips over hearing device. Has stretch cord and plastic locking clip.*

**PROS:** Stretchy cord, allows for full range of head motion. Spandex sleeve protects from mess/damage and from hearing aids being swallowed by infants. Plastic clip to clothing has no sharp edges, is hypoallergenic and locks to make it extremely difficult for a child to remove. Spandex sleeve increases comfort of device wear; prevents and assists in healing from chafing; also diminishes wind noise. Comes in many different colors to increase child's interest and pride in wearing hearing aids. Use with hearing aids, cochlear implants and BAHA for individuals of all ages. Models can attach to one or two hearing devices.

**CONS:** Some difficulty installing, because earmold must be removed and then reattached.

[www.gearforears.com](http://www.gearforears.com)

## Caps



*Caps cover hearing devices securing them from busy or yanking fingers.*

**PROS:** Effective at discouraging toddlers from yanking hearing aids off. Washable and durable. Hanna Andersson and Hearing Henry caps are cotton and have ties long enough to cross in front of neck and tie behind. Silkawear caps have mesh side panels and fasten securely under chin via Velcro. Discontinue after toddler 'yanking' phase subsides so child can practice putting on hearing aids (should be independently putting hearing aids on by age 3). Use with hearing aids, cochlear implants and BAHA. Come in various colors.

**CONS:** Warm for summer or southern climates.

[www.silkawear.com](http://www.silkawear.com)  
[www.hannaandersson.com](http://www.hannaandersson.com)  
[www.hearinghenry.com](http://www.hearinghenry.com)

## Safe-N-Sound



*Plastic loop slips over hearing device. Has poly cotton cord and metal alligator clip.*

**PROS:** Easy to install. One size fits all hearing aid and cochlear implant models. Flexible cotton cord comes in many different colors to increase child's interest and pride in wearing hearing aids. Option with barrette can be effective to discourage young child yanking out the hearing aid, while not causing discomfort when removed by parent. Used by children of all ages. Models can attach to one or two hearing devices or be used with eyeglasses. Works with hearing aids, cochlear implants, and BAHA.

**CONS:** Nonstretch cord. One size loop may not tightly fit all hearing instruments. The Alligator clip has nickel content, and can cause allergic reactions.

[www.getsafesound.com](http://www.getsafesound.com)

## Wig / Toupee Tape



*Tape specifically made for use on skin. Attaches to both hearing device and skin. Must replace tape on a regular basis to maintain security.*

**PROS:** Good short-term strategy. Tape does not require much of a 'tug' to remove hearing aid, but is helpful in preventing dislodging when child is just starting to use his hands to explore or when the device is large/heavy for the child's ear. Used primarily when child is young or very active. Use on all hearing devices.

**CONS:** The tape discourages child from pulling the hearing aid off due to possible discomfort when removed – by child or by parent. Child could learn to shy away from hearing aid because it is not comfortable when it is removed. If used frequently, tape can be expensive over time.

## Oto / Critter Clips



*Plastic loop security system, with thin poly cotton cord and metal alligator type clip. Models that attach to one or two hearing devices.*

**PROS:** Low cost, easy to install solution. One size fits all hearing aid models and implants. Cords come in many colors, and some models are available with cute animals on the face of the clip - encouraging small children to wear their aids. Used by children of all ages wearing hearing aids, cochlear implants or BAHA.

**CONS:** Breaks easily / not very durable. Cute animals can come off and be swallowed. Security level varies due to one-size fitting for all hearing instruments. The Alligator clip has sharp teeth and may pinch child's skin. Clip has nickel content, and can cause allergic reactions.

[www.westone.com](http://www.westone.com)

**#1** Rated

**#2** Rated

**#3** Rated

**#4** Rated

**#5** Rated

Earmolds must fit properly to keep hearing aids on the child's head. Young babies may need new earmolds every few weeks. Do NOT wait – get the earmolds remade when the hearing aids start to whistle or when the earmolds start to slip out with a light tug. Ask your child's audiologist about Comply Soft Wraps to help keep the earmolds in your child's ears while waiting for an appointment to get earmolds remade.

### 0-3 months

- When a tiny baby has needs, being able to hear mommy coming to pick him up develops a sense to trust and security. Hearing aids help with this security.
- Babies are not actively exploring with their hands under 6 months of age. Although a hearing aid may be knocked off, the baby will not intentionally remove the hearing aids.
- As long as hearing aid battery door locks are in place it is fine for him to keep his hearing aids on, even during naps. Although he could safely wear them at night too, moisture buildup in the earmold tube can be a problem as even a small drop of moisture can block sound from going into the ear. This moisture problem can be remedied by using a dry aid kit.
- Keep a dry aid kit (the "hearing aid house") in a place you can always find it, such as next to the diaper changing table so you always know where the hearing aids are and they can be put on and off easily.

### 4-6 months

- At this age, the infant may be turning to try to locate sounds (i.e., Dad's voice from the side while Mom is holding him).
- At about 4 months, typically developing babies begin to pick up objects and put them in their mouths. Locking battery doors are critical as batteries are poisonous if swallowed.
- A hearing aid retention accessory can help to prevent the child from getting the hearing aids to her mouth if she knocks one out of her ear. The retention accessory should have no sharp edges that could hurt baby, and also protect against moisture as food can be spread to many places as the baby learns how to eat solid food.



Caps

**About 6 months** babies discover their feet and hands and may use their hands to swipe against their ears.

- They won't intentionally remove their hearing aids but they may explore their ears with their hands, which can dislodge the hearing aids.
- Tightly fitting earmolds will help prevent the baby from easily knocking the hearing aid out of his soft ear.

**About 9 months** of age your baby may be enjoying his new ability to yank, pull, grab and push.

- He may grab a hat off his head or work very hard to take his socks or bib off. He may also start to enjoy pulling off his hearing aid (Look what I can do!).
- If he pulls off his hearing aids smile, calmly say "Hearing aids on! Baby can hear mommy now!" and then distract him with another on/off, yank to/fro, peek-a-boo kind of activity.
- He is not intentionally pulling off his hearing aid – he is just practicing making changes to his immediate world. Avoid responding with no-no or uh-oh as his intention is to practice the 'taking off' skill and not to remove the aids willfully.

**About 12 months** Most children are practicing how to walk and trying to talk - you are waiting for their first step and their first word!

- It may seem like your child is getting into everything. It isn't unusual for babies of this age to go through a 'yanking off the hearing aids' stage.
- Temperament plays a big role during this period and throughout toddlerhood. Babies who are more laid back, have regular schedules and are easy to soothe when they are unhappy are easier to train to leave the hearing aids alone than a child who is very active, sensitive to changes and is easily upset. Soothe your baby's upsets but do not let the hearing aids become the focus of how he can be sure to get your attention!
- As your baby develops the motor skills to remove the hearing aids and becomes interested in them, it is important for you to teach him and that only adults can take them off – not baby. Hearing aids on all waking hours (except for water-play) is necessary for brain, language and social development.



Ear Gear

# Meeting the Challenge

## Keeping Hearing Devices on Young Children

### WHY DO WE NEED HEARING AIDS

Children learn almost everything by hearing. Without using hearing aids all day, every day, your child's learning will likely be significantly delayed by the time they start Kindergarten. They might never catch up!

- The part of the brain that makes sense of sound needs to be developed before hearing can be used to learn. The goal of hearing aids is to make sound louder. This allows the auditory part of the brain to grow. This brain growth has to happen before a child can use hearing to learn to understand words, to talk and to read.
- Early growth of the brain in the first two years of life cannot be made up later. To develop the auditory part of the brain, a child must hear his or her best ALL DAY long, every day.
- Your child can't learn words he or she doesn't hear. Typically hearing children hear 46 million words by 4 years old. To learn new words from what people are saying around them, your child's hearing devices need to make speech clear and loud to hear the quiet speech sounds (like s, f, t) from more than a few feet away.
- Children need to listen for 20,000 hours before their brains are ready to learn how to read.

### WHEN DO WE NEED HEARING AIDS

To be ready to start school like other children, your child needs to wear hearing aids every waking hour from infancy.

- A child needs to use hearing aids all day, every day to develop speech, language and social skills like other children his or her age.
- Even children with 'mild' hearing loss may talk and understand more like 3 year olds when they enter kindergarten if they do not use hearing aids every waking hour.
- The important time for brain growth during the first two years cannot be made up later. Almost all children who enter school with learning delays do not 'catch up' once they go to school.



## Children's Hearing Aid Retention Project

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© 2013 For more strategies and information go to <http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/hearing-aids-on> or [www.JaneMadell.com/hearing-aids-on](http://www.JaneMadell.com/hearing-aids-on)



### Did you know?

Babies listen for about a year before they say their first word. A baby who wears hearing aids for only 2 hours a day may take 3 years to say his first word. Frustrations with not being able to communicate effectively can result in behavior and social problems.