

Tips for supporting your child with glue ear

Community Paediatric Audiology Service



This advice supplements the information in the 'Glue Ear: A guide for parents' leaflet provided by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). Further information can be obtained from the NDCS at www.ndcs.org.uk

What is 'Glue Ear'?

Glue ear is one of the most common childhood illnesses. For ears to work properly the middle ear needs to be kept full of air. Sometimes, particularly with colds, the middle ear becomes congested. This congestion makes it difficult for sound to get through. It then makes sound quiet and muffled. This is when you may notice your child not hearing well.

Your child's hearing may change from day to day. They may hear some sounds better than others. This can happen even if they don't appear ill or have an ear infection.

Usually this congestion is temporary and clears in 6 – 8 weeks, but not always. This is why we intend on checking your child's hearing again in a few months.

What you can do to help

While waiting for a temporary hearing problem to clear, there are some useful things you can do to support your child. These tips can also be helpful once your child's hearing has returned to normal.

- Inform others caring for your child that their hearing may be down. This includes nursery, school and childminders.
- Get your child's attention, by touching them or saying their name, before speaking to them. It is easier for your child if they can see your face when you are speaking.
- Give clear simple instructions that are easy to follow.
Try not to shout. Move nearer to them and repeat your message if they did not hear the first time.
- Shouting distorts your face and your child may think you are angry.
- Reduce the amount of noise in the background. This is usually the TV or radio. Background noise makes it harder to hear and listen.
- Teach and encourage your child to blow their nose. This will help to unblock the congestion.
- When looking at books together sit so your child can see your face and the book.

- Try to spend some quiet time with your child. Use this time to talk and play with them. Make sure you speak close enough so that they can hear you. Not hearing well may be confusing for your child. This time together will help reassure them.

Be aware that your child may become frustrated, aggressive, clingy, shy or tired from struggling to listen. It is possible that they have not heard you instead of being disobedient or naughty.

Why we wait a few months before seeing your child again

Remember that temporary hearing problems are normal in young children, particularly in winter. Having their hearing tested will not speed up the process of their hearing improving or change the support advice provided. Waiting a few months lets us see if the glue ear is likely to clear on its own. This helps us to advise you best on what to do next.

What happens if they still have glue ear at their next appointment?

If your child still has a hearing problem at their next appointment we will discuss options with you. This is likely to include referring them to an ENT colleague at Addenbrooke's Hospital.

It is important to remember to see your GP if you suspect your child may have an ear infection. The information in this handout should not stop you from seeing your GP for further treatment or advice.

For further information about this service contact:

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If you require this information in a different format such as in large print or on audio tape, or in a different language please contact the service on the details above.

If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may apply depending on your network) or email: ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net.

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.