

KEEPING HEARING DEVICES ON A LITTLE ONE: WHY IT MATTERS!

You have probably been told by your pediatric audiologist, "Make sure your child wears their hearing devices all waking hours." But that might be easier said than done. And what exactly does that mean, and how do you do it?

Hi, I'm Dr. Teresa Caraway from Hearing First, and we're here to support you as parents and as families who have a child with hearing loss so that they can learn to listen, talk, read, and thrive in life. In this video, we're going to talk about why it's important for your little one to wear their hearing aids all waking hours, and provide some suggestions or tips of how you can maximize that time.

You may be at that stage right now where your child, your little one is wanting to take their hearing devices off and on over, and over, and over again. And you may feel like that, "Wow, this is a lot." And in fact, you may even feel like your middle name needs to be changed to Perseverance because that is what it takes. But I guarantee you it will pay off huge dividends.

Why? Because it's about brain development. Remember, your hearing devices are brain access devices, and so wearing your hearing aids or your cochlear implants all waking hours means that their little brain is getting the stimulus and the input that it needs to grow and to develop. Your perseverance to keep hearing aids on all waking hours, it will pay off.

So what does it mean to wear your hearing devices all waking hours? Eyes open, ears on. Well, if you think about it, children with typical hearing, their ears never turn off, and so they have lots and lots of access to all the sounds, all the language that surrounds them 24/7.

So if you want your child to be caught up, to have age-appropriate speech and language skills, thinking and reading skills, that's why it's important to wear those devices all waking hours, because they need that same input, that same opportunity to grow and to develop just like children with typical hearing. And that's what hearing devices provide.

You may have a little one, and they may take one or two naps per day. And you may think, "Is it really even worth it to put these back on for just an hour or an hour and a half before they go back down for a nap?" Well, I guarantee you it is because every single minute counts for brain development.

So persevere, put those hearing devices back on, even if it's for what may be a shorter period of time. Keeping hearing devices on all waking hours is a little easier said than done and can be a little tricky at times, depending upon the age of the child.

One of the first things you want to do is when that child takes their devices off, to calmly and gently put the devices back on. Don't call big attention to it, but just put them back on and keep going.

The other thing that you can do is distract them from taking that device off by distracting their attention elsewhere while you put the device on. Hand them an interesting toy, hand them something that they can chew on, that they can play with, to take their attention and distract them from you putting the device back on.

The other thing is that there's many tools you can use, things such as wig tape, or toupee tape, or medical tape that helps hold the devices on the head and makes it a little bit harder, that when they go to pull it off, they feel that gentle tug.

Another thing on the market is that there are caps that you can purchase that protect that hearing device on their little heads and make it difficult for them to be able to get to the device and pull it off. There's special cords or clips that can clip on your child's shoulder or the back, so that if those devices fall off, they can quickly and easily be found.

Another thing is there's headbands made with little pockets so that it can protect that device as well from being pulled off. And then there's something that hugs the outer ear, that holds the device on and makes it more difficult to pull it off because it has to come off the whole ear.

Most of the time, little ones, it's a stage that they go through where they want to explore what is on their ears and what's on their head, and they'll pull them off. And every child will typically go through that stage. But sometimes it can also mean that there might be some other things that need to be looked at. Be sure and talk with your pediatric audiologist about it.

If you have any concerns at all, trust your parent gut. In other words, anytime you have a concern, make sure you talk with your team about that. You are not alone in your perseverance to overcome this challenge. And there are many parents just like you who are striving to keep hearing aids on all waking hours.

Remember, you're a brain-builder. It's all about growing your child's brain, providing them the very best opportunities they have to develop age-appropriate speech and language skills and literacy skills. No one is perfect, and you don't have to be perfect. It's all about taking one day at a time, one minute at a time, and doing the best that you can do.

If you're looking for additional support, additional tips and suggestions, come join the Hearing First Facebook group, Families with Children with Hearing Loss, because it means that, at any time, you have at your fingertips this whole support system where you can ask questions, get tips and insights from others who are either at this same place in the journey or have been there, done that, and have excellent tips and tricks.

Wherever you are in this journey, you are not alone, and Hearing First, we're here to support you every step of the way. So check out the link below for more information, more resources, and subscribe to our YouTube channel.