

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

IS THE CENTER OPEN FOR AUDIOLOGY IN-OFFICE APPOINTMENTS?

In accordance with the Governor Eric J. Holcomb's Executive Order closing all non-essential businesses and state buildings to the public and national COVID-19 guidance, the Center is not open for in-person appointments. Center staff are working remotely and, in lieu of face-to-face visits, we are available for consultation, to answer questions and to provide guidance and resources via email, telephone and virtually through video internet systems. Children whose appointments have been cancelled have been placed on a priority list and will be contacted and rescheduled at the earliest feasible time once we resume in-person appointments. The Center is available via telephone at 317-232-7349 or email at CDHHE@isdh.in.gov.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I NEED TO GO TO MY CHILD'S AUDIOLOGIST BUT CAN'T RIGHT NOW?

If a problem arises, you should contact your audiologist to find out whether he or she is available to assist you and if so, how that can be done. Audiologists at the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education are available for consultation via phone, email or video to assist in situations when a child's managing audiologist cannot provide consultation. For continuity of care, a family should seek out assistance of their child's managing audiologist first.

MY BABY HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH HEARING LOSS, BUT HIS/HER APPOINTMENT TO GET HEARING AIDS WAS CANCELLED. WHAT CAN I DO?

Although this is a stressful and unfortunate outcome of the COVID-19 crisis, there is much you can do during this time:

- Connect with another parent who has been through the experience of learning his or her child has hearing loss. If you have not been contacted by a parent at the Indiana Hands and Voices Guide by Your Side Program, call Mariana Barquet at 317-431-3991 or email mbarquet@isdh.in.gov.
- If you have not already enrolled in the Indiana's Early Intervention Program, First Steps, contact the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Early Intervention Network. This statewide specialized network within First

Steps will connect you with the appropriate representative to get you connected to this program. Call the CDHHE Network (855) 875-5193 or email CDHHEnetwork@isdh.in.gov.

- Continue to communicate with your baby! Speak close to his/her face and/or sign with animated facial expressions and gestures to promote the bonding process, encourage eye contact and conversational turn-taking
- Sing songs, recite nursery rhymes, do finger plays
- Start a journal about your experiences with your child; include feelings and emotions you are experiencing and observations about your child's hearing and response to sound
- Review parent friendly internet resources to learn more about hearing, hearing loss, hearing aid fitting process, and communication and technology options (see list of resources)
- Visit this website for additional activities: <https://eiclearinghouse.org/resources/trying-times/>

HOW DO I ENSURE MY CHILD'S HEARING AIDS ARE WORKING AND MY CHILD IS HEARING WELL?

Check your child's hearing aids and his or her responses to sound using these steps:

- Visually inspect the hearing aids and earmolds for wax buildup or signs of damage, which may affect sound quality.
- Complete a listening check, using the listening piece included in your pediatric care kit.
- Conduct cleaning and troubleshooting as needed. See <https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/AIS-Hearing-Aids-Troubleshooting.pdf>
- Confirm child's audibility using LING 6 sound check. See: <https://www.jtc.org/listening-with-ling-six/>

WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD'S HEARING AID STOPS WORKING OR IS BROKEN?

If a hearing aid stops working, try to follow the above instructions to troubleshoot the problem. If you are unable to identify the problem, contact your managing audiologist. If you are unable to reach your audiologist or if he or she is unable to assist you, contact the manufacturer of your device to determine whether there is a process to accommodate families in need of assistance during the COVID-19 crisis. Audiologists at the Center are also available to assist on a case-by-case basis.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD'S HEARING AID IS LOST?

Retrace your child's steps and make every attempt to locate the lost hearing aid. If unsuccessful in finding it, contact your managing audiologist for assistance and possible loaner amplification. Replacement hearing aids must be programmed for each child's specific hearing needs; therefore, it will be critical for you to notify your audiologist when you are sure the hearing aid cannot be found.

MY CHILD'S EARMOLDS SEEM LOOSE AND MAY NEED TO BE REPLACED (THE HEARING AIDS ARE MAKING A LOT OF NOISE/SQUEALING), WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Contact your child's audiologist for assistance. If you are unable to reach your audiologist or they are unable to provide assistance, try using earmold cream that may provide a temporary improved seal and reduce squealing (feedback).

OtoFerm cream is available at some discount and wholesalers such as Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/OtoFerm-Comfort-Cream-Plug-Lubricant/dp/B005IYE0IG>.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR MY PRESCHOOLER OR SCHOOL-AGED CHILD WHILE WE WAIT TO RESCHEDULE OUR HEARING AID FITTING OR FOLLOW UP AUDIOLOGY APPOINTMENT?

If you are struggling getting your child to wear hearing aids, this is an excellent opportunity to increase wear time. At this time, positive interactions with your child are important. Reading with them and learning about the next steps in their journey is what you can do right now. When professionals are able to resume normal functions, you will be ready to absorb new information, share what you have learned and the decisions you have made for your child. This is a great opportunity for your child to develop their independent self-advocacy skills. Those children who are ready to begin using Conditioned Play Audiometry, Learning to Listen Sounds and Ling 6 have great opportunities to play listening games and practice those skills to be ready for their next appointment when it arrives. You can practice these tasks by teaching your child to respond to a sound they can hear or feel. You can use a variety of objects/toys that you already have at home.

For example:

- Have your child throw socks rolled into balls into the hamper when he or she hears or feels a sound.
- Have your child put a puzzle piece into a puzzle when he or she hears or feels a sound.
- Have your child drop blocks into a bucket when he or she hears or feels a sound.
- Have your child retrieve dry cereal from under a cup when he or she hears or feels a sound.

Remember to vary the presentations of sounds. Learning to wait is an important step in learning the skill. Don't forget to reward your child to celebrate their success with a reward of your choice, including clapping and praise along the way.

Additional activities can be found here:

- *Babies:* <https://www.cochlear.com/us/communication-corner/program-intro/infants-sound-foundation-babies.htm>
- *Toddlers:* <https://www.cochlear.com/us/communication-corner/program/toddlers-sound-foundation-toddlers.htm>
- *School-Age:* <https://www.cochlear.com/us/communication-corner/program-intro/school-aged-sound-foundations.htm>
- *Self-Advocacy Apps:* <https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/for-professionals/self-advocacy-apps/>

IS IT BETTER TO CONNECT A CHILD'S HEARING DEVICE (HEARING AID, COCHLEAR IMPLANT, BAHA) TO TECHNOLOGY THROUGH BLUETOOTH OR THROUGH AN FM/DM SYSTEM?

The manner in which a child's personal hearing devices are connected to speech depends on the technology in his/her devices. Rarely are FM/DM *and* Bluetooth available for use without additional pieces of equipment in the hearing aid. The technology chosen should be based on the conditions of the learning environment and what/who the student requires additional aids to hear. Consult your managing audiologist for

recommendations. The Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education is available for consultation if there are specific questions.

HOW DO YOU TROUBLESHOOT A POOR CONNECTION TO TECHNOLOGY?

First, ensure proper function and adequate battery power to the personal hearing device(s) and complete a listening check. Then, ensure that the hearing devices and Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) are connected. Last, complete a listening check using the HAT to ensure transmission of the signal. Use the manual for the hearing devices to troubleshoot improper function of personal technology equipment and use the HAT manual to troubleshoot connectivity or function problems with assistive technology. If you cannot fix the problem alone, reach out to your audiologist for assistance. The Center audiologists are available to assist, as needed.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD PARENTS/TEACHERS/SLPS BE DOING LISTENING/DEVICE CHECKS?

Listening checks should be completed at the beginning of each day, prior to beginning a new therapy session and again any time suspicions arise when a child is not responding as is expected or typical with their personal hearing technology, regardless of whether indicator lights are working. See: <https://www.jtc.org/listening-with-ling-six/>

DOES MY CHILD NEED HEARING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (HAT) WHILE COMPLETING E-LEARNING AT HOME?

Classroom HAT is useful to help a child overcome the effects of background noise, reverberation and distance from the teacher. There are a number of things that can be done to optimize the learning environment in the home to ensure that your child has adequate access to e-learning materials and to determine whether additional assistive technology is needed.

If your student is using hearing aids/cochlear implants/bone-anchored hearing aids (BAHA) while participating in e-learning activities, they may benefit from HAT. If not, they may benefit from modifications to their home learning environment to optimize their ability to focus and listen to the adult assisting them. Furthermore, if the home learning environment has noise sources that are unpredictable or unable to be controlled (e.g., young siblings, sound from other e-learners' devices, pets, etc.) they would certainly benefit from HAT. *See the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing At-Home Connectivity Options for further details.*

THEY CANCELLED MY CHILD'S SURGERY DAY FOR HIS COCHLEAR IMPLANTS, WHAT DO WE DO UNTIL WE GET A NEW DATE?

Continue full-time use of prescribed amplification while you wait to reschedule surgery. See the next question for effective communication strategies to reduce gaps in communication. If enrolled in early intervention, reach out to your child's providers; update providers on the postponement and ask how they may be able to help in the meantime. Additionally, maintain open communication with your audiology and ENT providers regarding the rescheduling process.

MY CHILD GOT IMPLANTED BUT THEY CANCELLED HIS ACTIVATION APPOINTMENT, NOW WHAT?

Implement communication strategies to improve access to language while you await activation:

- Gain your child's attention before speaking.
- Communicate in a well-lit environment to provide visual cues.
- Maintain eye contact and face-to-face communication to direct your voice towards your child.
- Continue hearing aid or cochlear implant use of the other ear, if applicable.

MY CHILD'S HEARING AID STOPPED WORKING, WHAT CAN I DO TO CHECK IT OR WHAT CAN I DO TO SEE IF I CAN GET IT TO WORK?

Hearing aids malfunction for a variety of reasons. Try the following steps for at-home troubleshooting:

- Open the battery compartment and look for corrosion or debris on the battery contacts; gently clean the contacts with a wipe/cloth, if necessary.
- Get a new battery from a new pack, even if you were using a fresh battery; your current battery pack could be expired or faulty.
- Check the earmold for wax; even a small piece of wax can completely block the sound bore and the amplified signal. Remove any visible wax with your wax loop brush.
- Place the hearing aid in your drying container to remove any possible moisture buildup.
- Listen to the hearing aid after troubleshooting to assess for ongoing problems. Notify your audiologist if problems persist.

See <https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/AIS-Hearing-Aids-Troubleshooting.pdf> for additional troubleshooting tips.

MY CHILD'S EARMOLDS LOOK DISCOLORED. HOW DO I CLEAN THE EARMOLDS?

Disconnect the earmold (with the tubing) from the hearing aid. Use a brush and soft cloth to remove any visible wax from the earmold. If you have an effervescent cleaning tablet, mix with warm water in a small container (several drops of mild dish/baby soap will also work). Let the *earmold* soak in the water for 15 to 30 minutes (reminder: never submerge the hearing aid in water). Rinse the earmold with water and dry with a cloth. Use an air puffer from your care kit to blow air through the earmold tubing, removing residual moisture. Reattach the earmold to the hearing aid. Careful to match right earmold to right hearing aid and left earmold to left hearing aid! Watch this [Earmold Cleaning Video](#) for further instruction.

HOW CAN I EFFECTIVELY DISINFECT MY CHILD'S HEARING AIDS/COCHLEAR IMPLANTS?

You may clean the case/surface of your devices, careful to avoid getting moisture in the microphone ports. Use a damp wipe that does not contain alcohol or use a cotton cloth with mild soap solution. Remember, do not use excessive water or submerge the devices. Let them dry for 1 hour before using.

If you have an electronic dry and store case, it may disinfect the hearing aids for you! Some manufacturers utilize a UV light to kill bacteria on the amplification devices prior to drying. Check your electronic dryer for this feature, and run the hearing aids/cochlear implants through the cycle at night.

AUDIOLOGIST ALWAYS GAVE ME BATTERIES FOR THE HEARING AIDS, WHERE DO I BUY THEM NOW?

Contact your audiologist to see if batteries may be mailed to your home. Batteries may also be purchased from grocery stores, pharmacies, department stores, and wholesale distributors such as Amazon and Costco. Contact the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education if you are having difficulty getting batteries.

FIRST STEPS WAS SUPPOSED TO EVALUATE MY BABY, BUT NOW I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY ARE GOING TO DO THAT AND WE WANT AUDIOLOGY SERVICES.

First steps is continuing to follow their procedures including completing evaluations virtually. If your child has hearing loss they are eligible for services, including audiology. In-person audiology services will begin when normal clinic functions resume.

THE HEARING AID/CI GOT WET... WHAT CAN I DO TO DRY IT OUT AND SEE IF IT STILL WORKS?

Dry off any visible moisture. Open the battery door and remove the battery. Leave the battery compartment fully open. Disconnect the earmold from the hearing aid, if applicable. Place your device in your dry and store container overnight. In the morning, check the hearing aid/CI with a new battery. If it still does not work, run another cycle in your drying case. If you don't have a dryer, leave the device on a high countertop, away from pets and children overnight. If the device continues to malfunction, contact your audiologist to see if it is covered under a warranty.

PARENT RESOURCES

Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education

<http://cdhhe.blogspot.com/2019/12/sound-advice-audiology.html>

Did You Know Video Series

<http://handsandvoices.org/covid-19.html>

Hands and Voices

<https://handsandvoices.org/covid-19.html>

Parenting a Child Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

<http://Babyhearing.org>

Phonak/Advanced Bionics Listening Room

<https://thelisteningroom.com/>

Phonak Guide to Access Planning

<https://www.phonak.com/uk/en/support/children-and-parents/planning-guide-for-teens.html>

Success for Kids with Hearing Loss

<http://Successforkidswithhearingloss.org>

RESOURCES WITH ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Med El

<https://www.medel.com/ca/children-kids-corner/>

Self-Advocacy Games

<https://rule-the-school.com/apps-are-here-2/>

<https://rule-the-school.com/self-advocacy-board-game/>

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

For additional support and consultation, contact the Center audiologists.

Phone: (317) 232-7349

Email: CDHHE@isdh.in.gov

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to midnight).

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>