



Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust: Information for Families

Welcome to the Audiological Medicine Department at GOSH

This information sheet explains what happens when you and your child come for an audiology appointment at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). It also contains suggestions about how to make the appointment easier for you and your child. Please share this information with your child and anyone else who might come to the appointment with you.

Who are we and what do we do?

We are a team of doctors and audiologists who assess hearing and balance in children and young people. We work closely together to diagnose and manage hearing and balance disorders.

Who do we see?

Consultants or family doctors (GPs) may refer children and young people to us for assessment. This might be because

- there are concerns about a child's hearing and/or balance
- the child has a condition that may be associated with hearing and/or balance problems
- the child has been or are being treated with medicines that can affect hearing (such as some chemotherapy medicines) or affect balance.

Before you come to the appointment

- If your child is worried, please reassure them. The hearing tests are fun. The tests do not hurt. They often involve listening games. Some tests involve having an earpiece placed gently into the ear canal. These are like the earpieces used with MP3 players. Giving your child the chance to try listening to quiet sounds, such as a story or song, through headphones or MP3 player earphones before you come may help them get used to doing this. We rarely ask for blood tests.
- If you know that your child is prone to earwax, please ask your family doctor (GP) or referring doctor to check their ears before your appointment.
- Please allow up to two hours for hearing assessment appointments and up to three hours for balance assessment appointments, bringing nappies, food and drink as necessary.
- The hearing tests are done in a quiet room. If you have other children you might like to arrange for them to be looked after, or to bring along a family member or a friend who can look after them in the waiting area while your child's hearing is tested.

Where are we?

We are on the ground floor (level 2) in the Frontage Building, which is the main outpatient department at GOSH. From the main outpatient reception desk, please go to the ENT clinic area and tell the clinic staff you have arrived. We will come to meet you for your appointment.



What will the appointment involve?

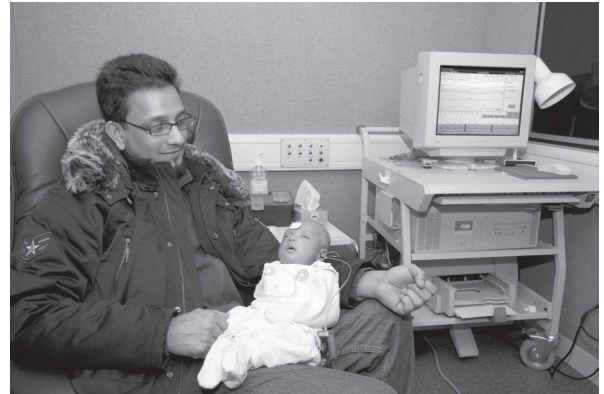
Usually an audiologist will test your child's hearing before you see the doctor. Your child may have any (but not all) of the following tests. The tests may be done in any order.



- **Tympanometry** – A small earpiece is placed in the ear for about 10 seconds to test how well your child's middle ear is working.



- **Oto-acoustic emissions** – This involves placing a small earpiece in the ear canal for about one minute. Clicking sounds are played through the earpiece and the response from the cochlea (inner ear) is recorded. The room needs to be quiet for this test.
- **Auditory brainstem response (ABR)** – Small stickers which have special sensors are placed on the skin to detect the electrical signal sent by the hearing nerves. Sounds are played through headphones, earphones or through a sound conductor placed behind the ear. This test shows the response of the hearing pathway up to the lower part of the brain. The room needs to be quiet for this test.



- **Distraction test** – This involves seeing how your child reacts to sounds made behind his or her head. It tests your child's hearing responses to different types of sounds at different levels of loudness. The room needs to be quiet for this test.
- **Visually reinforced audiometry (VRA)** – A puppet or toy, which lights up when a sound is played, is shown to your child. (If your child does not like puppets, please tell us before this test starts). When your child responds to a sound, the toy or puppet will light up again as a reward. VRA tests your child's hearing responses to different pitches or frequencies of sounds at different levels of loudness. If your child is able to wear earphones, each ear can be tested separately. The room needs to be quiet for this test.



- **Performance or play audiometry** – A young child puts a toy in a box (or plays another game) when he or she hears a sound. An older child may press a button when he or she hears a sound. This test measures your child's hearing responses to different pitches or frequencies of sounds at different levels of



loudness. We record the quietest sounds to which your child responds. If your child can wear earphones or headphones, each ear will be tested separately. The room needs to be quiet for this test.

Seeing the doctor

The doctor may ask you and your child about

- concerns about your child's hearing and balance
- your child's speech and language development
- your child's antenatal and birth history
- your child's medical illness(es) and treatment(s)
- any family history of hearing, tinnitus, balance or speech and language problems

The doctor will also examine your child. If there is earwax, he or she may remove this using a tiny suction tube or prescribe eardrops. If your child is prescribed eardrops, you will be given written instructions on how to give them or you could watch our podcast available on our website at www.gosh.nhs.uk/gosh_families/information_sheets/video.html. The team will explain the results of the hearing tests to you and your child. Please ask any questions at any stage.

What if my child has a hearing problem?

We may need to repeat tests to confirm the problem and find out more information about it. We will discuss treatment options with you. We may suggest investigations to try to find out what caused the hearing problem or referral for vision or balance assessment. Treatment options depend on various factors:

- the type of hearing problem
- the severity of the hearing problem
- whether one or both ears are affected
- how the hearing problem affects your child
- your child's medical problems and their treatment(s)
- any additional learning or developmental difficulties your child has

Initial options that might be suitable include:

- monitoring
- liaison with other professionals, such as advisory teachers of the hearing impaired or speech and language therapists
- hearing tactics, such as sitting at the front of the classroom, or reducing background noise
- nasal spray or nasal drops
- referral for grommets
- oral antibiotic treatment
- ear drops
- referral for hearing aid fitting

The team will explain which of these options may be suitable to help your child.

What happens next?

The doctors and audiologists will arrange further appointments as necessary. They will write back to your family doctor (GP) or referring doctor with the results of the assessments and send a copy to you.

Please tell us if you cannot attend your child's audiology appointment as soon as possible so we can offer the appointment to another child in the queue. We will try to rearrange your appointment for as soon as possible.



Frequently asked questions

I have been offered an appointment I cannot make

Please telephone the department on 020 7813 8430 as soon as you can to change or cancel your appointment.

The appointment is today and I cannot get to the hospital

Please let us know as soon as possible by ringing 020 7813 8430. If you are going to be late, we can check whether you can still be seen. If you are very late for your appointment, we may not be able to see you and will have to re-book.

My child is unwell and I am not sure whether I should come to the appointment

If a child is ill, they should stay at home. Child who are still infectious from illnesses like chicken pox should also stay at home. If your child has a blocked nose or an ear infection or dizziness, we may still want to see them. Please telephone 020 7813 8315 and ask to speak to an audiologist who will advise you.

I missed my child's appointment

Please contact us as soon as you can. If you fail to attend an appointment, we do not automatically book another. You will receive a letter asking you to make another appointment. Please phone 020 7813 8430 to make another appointment.

I need an interpreter

For British Sign Language or foreign language interpreters, please telephone 020 7813 8430. Please note that we need several weeks' notice to book BSL interpreters.

Do you have creche facilities?

No, we have a play area for children with appointments but parents are responsible for supervising their children while they play there.

Do you have baby changing facilities?

We have changing facilities and a small room where you can feed your baby. Please ask at the reception desk for directions.

Further information and support

National Deaf Children's Society

Helpline: 0808 800 8880

Website: www.ndcs.org.uk

The NDCS produce a very helpful booklet called Understanding deafness, which is available on their website at www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/understanding_deafness/index.html They also produce information on balance and balance disorders.

The Early Support Programme at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has published a book called Information for parents: deafness (order code ES11). The booklet is also available in other languages from the DCSF website. Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DCSF Publications

PO Box 5050

Sherwood Park

Annesley

Nottingham NG15 0DJ

Email: dcsf@prolog.uk.com

Phone: 0845 602 2260

Textphone: 0845 605 5560

Fax: 0845 603 3360

Website: www.earlysupport.org.uk