

Preparing for Pediatric Hearing Clinic Appointments

Mass Eye and Ear recognizes that a visit to the hearing clinic can be overwhelming for young patients and their caregivers. We have developed the following suggestions to support you before, during and after your appointment.

Before you arrive

1. Talk with your child about what to expect. Use pictures and visuals to help them understand the process at their current language level. If your child is scheduled for a hearing test, you can use the “My Hearing Appointment” social story for this. [Click here](#) to access the story, which is also available on the [Pediatric Hearing Center](#) webpage.
2. Bring all important items to the appointment:
 - a. Hearing devices, such as hearing aids, bone anchored devices or cochlear implants.
 - b. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) or other communication supports, if used.
 - c. Printed pictures of the My Hearing Appointment social story, if preferred.
 - d. Comfort item, such as a favorite toy, doll, stuffed animal or blanket.
 - e. Familiar toys your child uses at home if they will be doing a conditioned play task. For example, putting blocks in a shape sorter) but are not comfortable with toys in the Hearing Clinic.
3. Practice at home before your appointment! For example, a hearing test may involve placing headphones on your child. Your child may be more comfortable with this during the appointment if they practice with headphones at home first.
4. Be encouraging! A caregiver’s positive attitude can help a child feel less anxious about their visit.

During your visit

1. You and the clinician should give clear expectations to your child:
 - a. This might include using physical or digital picture boards, reading the My Hearing Appointment social story or putting stickers on pictures of each activity during an appointment.
2. Prepare your child for stages of the appointment by showing them what comes next. Use pictures as needed and use “first, then” statements: “First we go into the booth, then you sit in the chair.”
3. When needed, the clinician may model actions for your child on another person or comfort item, such as a doll or stuffed toy. For example, “First, it’s Bear’s turn to wear the headphones. Good job, Bear! Now it’s your turn!”
4. Use familiar toys during tasks. For example, if your child practiced conditioned play by dropping toy cars into a bucket, you might want to bring your toys to the appointment instead of using the clinic’s toys.
5. Help your child communicate at their level. This might mean using AAC devices, picture boards, tablets or something as simple as a picture with a happy and sad face so your child can point to answer the question, “How do you feel?”
6. Allow your child to ask for and receive breaks. We will accommodate as best we can!

7. Remain calm, even when things do not go as planned. Our experienced clinicians understand and expect that children may not always “behave perfectly” at appointments.
8. Do your best to stay positive and be encouraging. Avoid pointing out any behaviors you feel are negative but emphasize positive behaviors you see! You might comment, “Wow, you are sitting so nicely and looking at your book!”
9. Decide beforehand what kind of break your child may benefit from. This could be quiet play with a comfort toy for a minute, singing a favorite song or coloring a picture. Our clinicians will do their best to allow for breaks when it is possible to do so.
10. We will try to help end the appointment on a positive note. Clinicians always do their best to complete everything that is needed at the appointment, but sometimes it is not possible to get everything finished in one visit. Thank you for your understanding!

After the appointment

1. Praise your child’s successes, efforts and positive behaviors! This will help your child create positive memories about visiting the hearing clinic. Words of praise, hugs, high fives or stickers might be good choices, depending on your child’s needs and preferences.
2. If your child wears hearing devices but does not yet use them full time, use positive reinforcement to increase wearing these as much as possible every day.
 - a. For example, encourage using hearing devices while your child is involved in a favorite activity or playing with a favorite toy, so your child forms a positive connection.
 - b. Consider making a sticker chart where your child gets a sticker after wearing their hearing device for specific times of the day. Increase times they wear devices as much as possible.
 - c. Adjust expectations based on what your child can do and what motivates them.
 - d. Remember this when considering hearing devices: “If a child only wears amplification four hours per day, it will take six years for that child to hear what a typical child who does not need hearing aids hears in one year” (Dr. Jane Madell, pediatric audiologist).
3. Follow-up on your audiologist’s recommendations and schedule your next appointment right away. If possible, schedule with the same clinician to help your child have more consistency at our clinic.
4. We welcome you to look at more resources online through [our website](#).