



# Good tips for communication

**This brochure contains the facts you should know when you meet a child or a young person who has a hearing loss. The main thing is to remember that is a relatively small effort to take into account a hearing impairment.**

## Hearing impairments in a nutshell

Hearing impairments can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. Hearing aids, cochlear implants and other assistive devices can improve a child's hearing, but can not make them hear normally. It is always important to bear in mind the hearing impairment.

You should know how well the child or the young person hears. Ask the child's parents or the young person themselves. Remember the effects of the surroundings: echoing or large spaces, long distances or background noises all significantly disturb hearing.



## The ABC of hearing aids

Don't be shy about learning about the assistive devices. Ask the child or the young person to introduce them. The most common ones are:



### • Hearing aids:

There can be one or two. Usually, you'll find them behind the ear lobe. Hearing aids amplify all surrounding sounds: speech as well as noise.

### • Cochlear implants:

Cochlear implants are used in rehabilitation when the hearing loss is severe or worse. Implant users hear practically nothing or very poorly without their devices. A cochlear implant consists of an internal, surgically inserted component and an ex-

ternal sound processor. Sometimes, implant users also wear a hearing aid in their other ear.

### • FM systems or wireless accessories:

An FM system is an assistive hearing device that enhances the use of hearing aids and/or cochlear implants and serves as additional hearing assistance for a child/young person. The speaker holds the transmitter and the child holds the receiver that is usually integrated into the hearing aid or the cochlear implant. The sound is transmitted directly from the transmitter's microphone to the hearing aid or implant without disturbing background noise. A big help with a relatively small effort!



## Ease communication

• **Make eye contact and go closer** – distance makes hearing more difficult.

• **Make the child/young person notice you** by waving your hands or by touching their shoulders. This way, they know you have something to say.

• **Speak slowly and articulate clearly.** The hearing-impaired lipread the missing parts, so you should not turn your back on them while speaking.

• **Remove visual obstructions.** Flailing hands and paper sheets in front of your face make lipreading more difficult.



• **Watch the child's reactions.**

Are you sure they understood? You can repeat the message by using different words. If needed, use simple terms and give clear instructions.

• **Don't be shy about using your hands.**

Come, go, stop, there, here and many other common instructions can easily be shown with simple hand gestures.

• Sometimes, the devices come off in action-packed activities. Wait until the child reattaches them before you continue speaking. If needed, help with the reattachment.

## Show, help and facilitate

• **Use expressions and gestures.** You can communicate a lot without a single word.

• **Visualize as often as you can and, if needed, show by example.**

That way, the child/young person sees what they are supposed to see. You can explain the activity by using objects, pointing directions or showing amounts with fingers.

• **Be patient!** Hearing-impaired children need extra support, encouragement and recognition. Give lots of earned praise.



# Remember!



## Water is wet!

Most hearing aids and cochlear implants are splash- and rain-proof. Different devices have different water resistances so it is best to ask about them from the parents or the manufacturer. The devices should be removed before sauna and they should be either removed or protected with a specially designed water-proof cover before shower or swimming. Remember that when the outer parts of the cochlear implant are removed, the child will not hear anything or hears only a little.

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## Electricity in the air!

**Static electricity** can cause noise or, very rarely, a fault in the settings of a cochlear implant. Plastic slides and trampolines are often a source of static electricity, so it is a good practise to touch the child's shoulder or arm before touching the implant's processor. That will discharge the static electricity.

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Importers can provide you with the manufacturers' instructions about water resistance and static electricity.



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