

# Developing early listening skills

## Creating a good listening environment

When a child wears a hearing aid or cochlear implant, it is more difficult to hear speech when there is competing background noise. How can you make your home a better listening environment?

Walk around your house, taking notice of what you hear – washing machine, traffic noise, fan on the heater – could these sounds interfere with your child hearing spoken language? Can you try to eliminate these background noises, or move away from the source of the sound? Try to always have a quiet environment when you are interacting with your child.

## Early listening skills – paying attention to sound

Sounds come in all volumes and pitches. The aim in these early weeks is to help your child learn to pay attention to these sounds. Over time, your child will begin to recognise and respond to these sounds in meaningful ways.

Throughout the day pay attention to the sounds in and around your home. Some examples are the phone, the doorbell, the dishwasher, the dog barking, or water running. When a meaningful environmental sound like this occurs:

- Pause and listen to the sound with your child.
- Do something to show you are listening to a sound, like pointing to your ear or asking, "What's that?" See if your child notices the sound too.
- Point out the sound source. Talk about the new sound and imitate it. This activity helps your child to hear a sound and attach meaning to it.

## Recognising sounds and spoken language

The ability to recognise sound happens after many repeated meaningful exposures to the same sound. It's how we all learn. Over time, your child will begin to recognise some of these sounds.

There are some important things to remember when helping your child start to recognise sounds and spoken language:

- Present sounds that happen naturally. It's not necessary to expose your child to a lot of sounds that have no meaning or that don't occur naturally in his/her environment.



- Try to repeat and make the sounds last longer. Present sounds in a repetitive way, or extend the sounds or speech when you can. This allows your child to hear the sound for a longer duration and process what the sound is like. Repeat, repeat, repeat.
- Vary the sounds of your voice and the duration (length of time), intensity (loudness) and pitch (low to high).

If you are having any difficulties with these strategies, please speak with your clinician at the Cochlear Implant Clinic.

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