

Language & Learning

Decisions...Decisions

Amplification Options

When babies are born, they are still developing their ability to use their senses, including hearing. Babies who can use at least some of their residual hearing will benefit from early chances to listen, provided by devices like hearing aids or cochlear implants. Using these devices to make sounds louder or clearer is called using amplification. Not every baby born with a hearing loss can benefit from amplification, but most can.

You will probably be making decisions about whether or not to use amplification, what kind of hearing aid to select, and whether or not to consider a cochlear implant. To make any of these decisions, you will need to gather information from many sources: professionals, other parents, your infant/family specialist, and the Internet.

Finding appropriate amplification is just the beginning, however. Because hearing aids and cochlear implants work differently than glasses, or ears with normal hearing, your baby will need you to guide those early listening experiences. From your infant/family specialist, your audiologist, or your speech/language clinician, you can learn ways to keep the hearing aids on and working well. You can make your house a good listening environment. You can learn how to call your baby's attention to sounds and what they mean. You can learn how to make speech as audible as possible, and how to encourage your baby to listen to his or her own voice as well as yours.

For more information about hearing aids and other amplification, see the Hearing and Amplification section of www.babyhearing.org.