

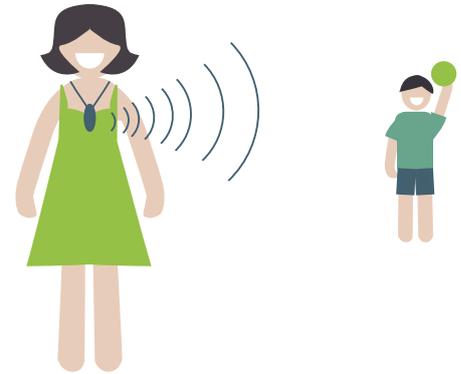
Why use radio aids with young deaf children?



Hearing is essential for learning spoken language and the earlier a child can hear speech, the better their opportunity to learn to listen and talk. However everyday life presents challenges for a young child with hearing loss: noise and distance from their parent when travelling in the car or buggy, walking and playing outside and even around the house make it difficult to hear speech and jeopardise spoken language development. Using a radio aid can overcome these challenges and may reduce the risk to spoken language.

Radio aid use is well-established for school-age children; however provision during these vital early years is inconsistent and inequitable.

This study asked 21 families of young deaf children about the benefits and challenges of using a radio aid in everyday life and used quantitative and qualitative measures to capture important predictors of spoken language outcomes.



Radio aids transmit a parent's voice directly to the child to overcome these daily challenges of distance and noise.

Findings

Everyday situations present a risk to learning spoken language. This study shows that using a radio aid can reduce this risk and maximise potential benefits for the child and their family by:

- Improving hearing for speech in difficult listening conditions
- Increasing the amount parents talk and interact with their child
- Having a positive impact on the family's well-being

Radio aid equipment can be challenging, but benefits largely outweigh any difficulties. Successful radio aid use requires timely and good quality information and support.

'Speech-wise she is picking up on more; she is using more language because she can hear what we are saying more. She is definitely more vocal with it, more likely to communicate'



Recommendations

All parents of a young deaf child should be informed of the significant potential benefits of radio aids and have the opportunity and support to use this technology at home

Access to radio aids should be equitable for all pre-school children

Manufacturers should respond to the identified needs of children and families in everyday life

Professionals should be knowledgeable about managing the latest technologies

'As a parent, it is a massive, massive reassurance to walk down the street with him and know he can hear me'

