

Glue Ear

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This patient information aims to tell you what glue ear is, the signs a child may have glue ear, what management options are available and tips on how to help your child. You will have been given this information if glue ear has been suspected or identified.

What is Glue Ear?

Glue ear also known as Otitis Media with Effusion (OME) occurs when there is a build-up of sticky fluid behind the ear drum which fills the middle ear cavity. This would normally be air filled. Glue ear can occur when the Eustachian tube (the connecting tube between the middle ear and the back of the nose and upper throat, the nasopharynx) has become blocked. This can result in a person being unable to equalise the pressure behind their ear drum. This often happens following a cold.

With fluid filling the middle ear, it becomes harder for sound to pass through to the inner ear resulting in quieter sounds being difficult to hear.

Glue ear is very common in children and can affect one or both of the ears. It is usually a temporary condition.

Signs of Glue Ear

Sometimes glue ear is linked with ear infections; in which case your child may experience discomfort and possible leaking from the ears should the ear drum perforate (burst).

However, often the child may experience little or no discomfort and therefore it may be more behavioural changes that you notice. These could include:

- Not responding to their name when called
- Getting frustrated
- Lack of attention
- Wanting sounds on their TV/media devices louder
- Preferring to play on their own

It can be difficult to gauge if a child is being “naughty or stubborn” or genuinely cannot hear very well.

Glue ear can often cause fluctuations in a child’s hearing ability due to the amount and consistency of the fluid in the middle ear. This can make it tricky to pick up on.

Usually glue ear is temporary, however, if it is recurrent or long term a child's speech and language development can be affected and without extra support they could fall behind at school.

Management options

The advice in relation to the management of glue ear is based upon the latest guidance published by NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence).

Since hearing loss due to glue ear is usually temporary a watch and wait period of 3 months is the first step.

After this time period the management options are discussed with the parents/carers. These include:

- Surgical – grommets
- Non-surgical – temporary hearing aids/amplification
- No active treatment – continue to watch and wait and/or the use of Otovent*

A further leaflet on “Management options for glue ear” explaining these in more detail will be issued.

** Otovent ~ This auto inflation product contains latex. Please refer to manufacturer's guidelines for all risks associated with this product.*

What you can do to help your child

As a parent you cannot see if your child has glue ear and the nature of glue ear is that it can come and go and therefore the hearing may fluctuate. Some parents find the app “Hear Glue Ear” a very useful tool to indicate if their child is having difficulty with their hearing or not.

This information is useful to relay to a child's teacher or nursery practitioner so that adaptations can be made to help a child hear more easily, for example sitting at the front of the class.

Tips you can also utilise include:

- Getting your child's attention before talking to them
- Making sure your child can see your face when you speak
- Speaking clearly and at a normal pace to your child, do not shout
- Try to keep background noise to a minimum

What Support is available?

The Paediatric Audiology Team

If you require support or information the team is available to help deal with issues relating to hearing loss and hearing aids. Please note that the department is currently unable to support any virtual appointments.

They can be contacted by:

Phone: (01522) 573254 or (01205) 446478

Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

Write: Clinic 6, Outpatients, Lincoln County Hospital, LN2 5QY

ENT Suite, Outpatients, Pilgrim Hospital, Boston, PE21 9QS

Email: ulth.audiology.department@nhs.net

Support Groups:

Sensory Education and Support Team (SEST)

If your child has been prescribed hearing aids and attends nursery or a school setting they can be referred to SEST for a one off information, advice and strategy visit from a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD).

Nursery/School SENCo can request referral forms by emailing:

BS_SEND@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Website: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/63945/sensory-education-and-support-team

Email: sest@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01522 553332

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

Website: ndcs.org.uk

Email: ndcs@ndcs.org.uk

SEND Local Offer

Provide information on services, events and advice on health, education and social care for children and young people.

Website: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/homepage/131/send-local-offer

Further sources of information:

NHS England : [NHS England » Decision support tool: making a decision about glue ear if your child has hearing loss](#)

Website: www.ulh.nhs.uk

Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Website: www.yourhearinghelper.com

Tell Us What You Think...

Your views are important to us, so we would really appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey.

The findings will help us to improve the department and to deliver better services to our patients.

All of the information that you provide will be anonymous and will be treated in the strictest confidence.

To leave your feedback, please scan the QR code:



Paper formats of this survey can be obtained directly from the Audiology Departments.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional provides you.

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