



What does a visit to the children's hearing clinic involve?



How to contact us

Our address is: The Children's Hearing Clinic
Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust
Cliftonville
Northampton NN1 5BD
(01604) 545810 (appointment queries)
(01604) 545840 (any other queries)

You can contact us between 8.30am - 4.30pm weekdays (excluding Bank Holidays).

Please make sure we have your current address and contact telephone number in case we need to contact you.

Other information

If you would like to add to this information for parents please let a member of staff know during your appointment.

For the benefit of our patients, visitors and staff, Northampton General Hospital operates a smoke-free policy. This means smoking is not allowed on the trust site, including all buildings, grounds and car parks.

Leaflets, information, friendly advice and support on giving up smoking and nicotine replacement therapy are available from the local Stop Smoking Help Line on (01604) 615272, or the free national helpline 0800 169069 and local pharmacies.

Car parking spaces are very limited here at Northampton General Hospital therefore please arrive early allowing additional time for parking or alternatively arrange to be dropped off and collected.

When will I get the results of the tests?

Once the tests have been carried out we usually have a good idea of how your child is hearing.

Sometimes we want to review your child/baby's results with other members of our team first. If we need to do this we will ask you to come back for a further appointment for the results. Please bring someone with you for these appointments e.g. partner, grandparent or friend so that you can both listen to the information.

We will make a plan with you if we need to do anything else e.g. further testing.

Your child's information

Part of your child's record is kept electronically. Professionals from other agencies e.g. an educational audiologist has access to this information in order to provide the best ongoing care for children who have a hearing loss. Please inform us if you do not agree to this. You can withdraw your agreement at any time.

On occasion we may ask you if your health visitor or a teacher specialising in children's hearing problems can join us for your child's appointment.

Introduction

The Children's Hearing Clinic is part of Northampton General Hospital.

Your child has been referred to the Children's Hearing Clinic for further hearing tests.

What happens during this visit?

We will talk to you about any worries or concerns you have about your child's hearing and development. The appointment usually lasts for about half an hour but sometimes it can take longer.

One or two members of our team will test your baby's/child's hearing. Our team includes audiologists specialising in children's hearing and children's doctors.

How do we test hearing?

We test in specially sound proofed rooms.

The way we test your child's hearing will depend on their age and development. None of the hearing tests will hurt.

Auditory Brain Stem Response Testing (ABR) - In babies or children with extra needs or children finding 'play' testing techniques difficult we rely on tests that do not depend on their co-operation. We need your baby/child to be very still (babies can have the tests asleep, young children usually need sedation). These tests are a guide to your child's hearing. We may take a day or two looking at the results. We will then ask you to come back for the results. Please bring someone with you for these appointments e.g. partner, grandparent or a friend so you can both listen to the information.

Otoacoustic Emissions - We can measure the tiny noises made by healthy sound sensitive cells in the hearing organ.

Co-operative Testing - For infants and children from 6 months to 4 years, the hearing tests are based on 'play' techniques. Two members of staff will be involved. One will make sounds, the other will make sure your child's attention is just right for responding to the sound. They may spend a few minutes deciding who will do what before they call you into the testing room.

Children who have difficulties with their hearing become very good with other senses. Both you and the members of our team need to be very careful not to give any other clues that a noise is being made. We have to be careful that we are **only testing your child's hearing** and not any other senses. We will ask for 6 to 12 month old babies to sit on your lap in a certain way. To make sure there are as few distractions as possible, we ask that only the child whose hearing is being tested and a parent/guardian are in the room. Please arrange for another adult to look after brothers and sisters.

During the test we first make sure your child understands what we want them to do. We will be very clear in our instructions and praise. We will normally be seeking 2 responses out of each 3 set of sounds. The sounds will be produced randomly and include times when we don't make a sound.

As soon as your child is able (sometime between 6 to 12 months) we may use small ear probes or headphones to gather information on each ear separately. We can test the hearing of the hearing organs (the cochleae) by using a small vibrator (bone conductor) behind the ear.

What are audiograms?

From 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 years old we can usually plot a graph of your child's hearing separately for each ear. This graph is called an audiogram. Small ear pieces or headphones help us gather information from each ear on its own.

We may ask you to wait outside the testing room if your child is confident to do the test on their own.

Sometimes we need to use a technique called 'masking' e.g. if hearing seems to be different in one ear compared to the other. We play a background noise in one ear to keep it occupied while we test the hearing of the other ear. This gives us specially detailed information about the hearing in each ear. It is very difficult for small children to do.

What is a tympanogram?

A soft ear piece is placed in your child's ear. We measure how well the middle ear is working. Tympanograms are a very useful measure of fluid or 'glue ear' affecting hearing. We always try and do this test, on babies, children and young people.

What will happen if my child does not co-operate with the test?

Small children find it hard to concentrate for long periods, so we will get as much information as possible during their appointment. Sometimes it takes us a little time and more than one appointment to gather all the information we want, so we ask you to be patient.

Don't worry, if we cannot complete all the tests we will make another appointment and try again.