

# What is Sound Sensitivity?

## Patient/Parent and Carer Information

Community Children's Audiology Services



The Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website is available on the link:  
<https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets> or scan the QR code.

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You may have some questions about the sensitivity to sound that your child is presenting. This leaflet aims to help you understand more about sound sensitivity and answer any questions you have.

## What is Sound Sensitivity?

Some children find certain loud sounds to be uncomfortable, painful, or upsetting, but they can tolerate loud noises they make themselves (such as banging a drum or musical toys). Common examples of sounds children dislike are:

- Hand dryers
- Vacuum Cleaners
- Fireworks
- Other children laughing or shouting

## Common Behavioural Traits

- Children with sound sensitivity may show their discomfort to these sounds by covering their ears, screaming, or crying. They may even try to escape the noise by leaving the room/noisy environment.
- Certain sounds or noisy environments may cause distress or anxiety.
- A child may refuse to be near the environment that is causing them distress. Some examples include school assemblies, outdoor based activities, and parties.

## Types of Sound Sensitivity

Sometimes a child develops a fear of loud sounds, and this is called **phonophobia**. Some of these sounds include the traffic, concerts and emergency response vehicles (such fire engines, ambulances and police cars).

Sometimes a child develops an extreme dislike of certain sounds, resulting in an emotional response. This is called **misophonia**. Some of these sounds include chewing noises, crunching, sniffing and tapping.

## Glue ear and Sound Sensitivity

It is common for children with glue ear to have fluctuations in their hearing. If your child experiences episodes of reduced hearing, they may seem to be more sensitive to sounds once their hearing improves again. This is because their

brain is adapting to the improvement in hearing. It may take some time for this sensitivity to settle down.

## What Is Hyperacusis?

In some **rare** cases, a child may experience hypersensitivity to sounds. The medical term for this is hyperacusis. This usually results in an extreme dislike of certain sounds that are unbearable and/or are causing physical pain. Hyperacusis may essentially cause physical discomfort to a child.

## What Should You Avoid?

If a child is showing signs of sound sensitivity, avoid giving them headphones, earplugs, or ear defenders. The use of these may cause your child to get used to the reduced volume, making it more difficult for them to adjust to the normal level of sound that is around them. Ear defenders may cause them to become more sensitive to sounds.

## How Can You Help?

With the right approach, you can help your child manage their sound sensitivity. Remember, if the sound is not too loud for **you**, it will not cause damage to your child's ears. Here are some useful tips:

- Keep a record of the sounds that cause your child distress. Note how long your child was upset for and what helped.
- Reassure your child. Focus on an enjoyable part, such as the colourful lights of the fireworks. This will help reduce your child's anxiety and symptoms.
- Allowing your child to have control over the sound may improve their reaction. For example, helping with the hoovering, or recording the sound and letting the child be in control of the volume or on/off switch.
- Repeated low level exposure to the problem noise whilst your child is playing may reduce their anxiety and help them get used to the sound. Exposure to this noise can even be done by playing it in the background.
- It may help to involve your child with the noisy situation. For example, involve them in the school assembly instead of just watching it. This often focuses their attention elsewhere.
- Allow your child to move further away from a noisy situation until they feel comfortable.

- It may help to explain and prepare your child before going somewhere noisy. It could be helpful to explain where you are going and why.

If your child is going to an event such as a party or large gathering, they may feel discouraged from attending due to the loud noises. It may help if your child is given an incentive or a reason for attending. Allowing the child to come out of the event/party for breaks, if needed, may also help.

## How Can Others Help?

Find out which of the suggestions are the most helpful for your child. Share this information with everyone who cares for your child; this may include nursery, school, or wider family. It will be useful for others to be informed.

If you have any queries or require any further information about your child's appointment, please contact:

### **Children's Audiology**

Platt Bridge Health Centre

Rivington Avenue

Platt Bridge

Wigan

WN2 5NG

**Tel: 01942 482450**

**To find more detailed information please refer to:**

The National Deaf Society website on <http://www.ndcs.org.uk/>

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

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## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager  
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
Wigan Lane  
Wigan  
WN1 2NN

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## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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## How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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