



# Hearing test after treatment for meningitis

## Information for parents and carers of children who have been treated for meningitis or bacterial septicaemia

This leaflet is not meant to replace the information discussed between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion or as a useful reminder of the key points.

Approximately one in 10 children who survive meningitis develop deafness or hearing loss as a result of the illness, making deafness the most common after effect of meningitis.

Other common long term effects of meningitis include tinnitus (permanent or temporary ringing sounds) in the ears and problems with balance.

Studies have shown that around 22 out of every 100 children who survived meningitis were not tested for loss of hearing<sup>1</sup>.

### Why is it important for my child to have a hearing test?

Hearing loss may not be immediately obvious in children. It can cause speech and language problems resulting in speech delay, especially in younger children who have not developed speech yet. It can also result in major changes in the social, educational, and emotional wellbeing of affected children, their families, and their schools.

### When will my child have a hearing test?

The hearing test should be done within four weeks of your child recovering from meningitis and being well enough to test. If any hearing loss found is too severe to benefit from conventional behind-the-ear hearing aids, children may be referred for cochlear implantation assessment without delay.

If a cochlear implant assessment is necessary, we refer your child to a hospital in London for a detailed assessment to determine if a cochlear implant may help them.



## What is cochlear implantation?

A cochlear implant is a device implanted into the inner ear (cochlea) under a general anaesthetic (your child will be asleep during the procedure). Overgrowth of bone within the inner ear happens quickly after meningitis, so delays in assessment can reduce the success of the cochlear implantation.

## How is the hearing test arranged?

Hearing tests can be arranged with the East Kent Children's Hearing Service (EKCHS), before your child is discharged from hospital. The paediatrician, the doctor who treated your child for meningitis, would normally refer your child to EKCHS for a hearing test.

All parents are strongly urged to make sure that they keep their child's hearing test appointment, in order to either rule out or confirm hearing loss.

## Where will my child have their hearing test?

Your child's hearing test will take place at either:

- Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Canterbury
- Buckland Hospital, Dover
- the Children Multiagency Specialist Hub (MASH) at Greenbanks, Margate
- the Rainbow Centre MASH, Ashford
- Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital, Margate; or
- William Harvey Hospital, Ashford.

Your child's appointment letter will give the time, date, and address of their clinic appointment.

## What will happen during the hearing test?

Sound is played into your child's ears through earphones or headphones, and their reactions are recorded. The test is non-invasive and will not hurt your child.

Depending on your child's age, the test can be done by playing a game or looking at a puppet or monitor for younger children. For babies less than three months old the test is done while they are asleep.

Parents remain with their children throughout the test.

## Who will perform the hearing test?

Testing is carried out by an audiologist (a healthcare professional who deals with the detection, diagnosis, and management of hearing problems).

## How long does the test take?

The test will take at least 30 minutes, maybe longer for babies.

## What happens after the hearing test?

Your child's test results will be explained to you before you leave hospital. If their hearing is found to be normal, your child will be discharged from hospital.

## What if deafness is identified?

If deafness is identified the doctor or audiologist will discuss your options. This might be another hearing test at a later date, use of amplification such as hearing aids, or if indicated, referral for a cochlear implant assessment.

## Contact information

To book an appointment for a hearing test please contact:

- **East Kent Children's Hearing Services (EKCHS)**

1st Floor, Children's Assessment Centre  
Kent and Canterbury Hospital  
Ethelbert Road, Canterbury  
Kent CT1 3NG

Telephone: 01227 86 64 87

Mobile: 07881 94 06 89

Email: [ekh-tr.eastkentchildrenshearingservice@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.eastkentchildrenshearingservice@nhs.net)

## References

1. **Meningitis Research Foundation**

Web: [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org)

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients**

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site [www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation)