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## eHealth can support parents as they learn new skills and routines

Dr. Karen Muñoz shares 5 key considerations for including eHealth as part of your protocol with parents and a resource to help you get started.

Do you have children in your practice that inconsistently use their hearing aids?

When children are not wearing well-functioning hearing aids, they are missing important language learning opportunities. Children are learning all the time, and research has found that wearing hearing aids ten or more hours per day makes a difference in language outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

Fitting hearing aids that are appropriately adjusted soon after

eHealth supplements typical audiology services to support parents as they learn new skills and integrate new routines into their daily lives. Parents that participated in an eHealth study had more confidence and monitored hearing aids more often than parents who received typical audiology services only,<sup>2</sup> and visits were only about ten minutes in length.<sup>3</sup>

### Definition of eHealth

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines eHealth as "the cost-effective and secure use of information and communications technologies in support of health and health-related field, including health care services, health surveillance, health literature, and health education, knowledge and research."<sup>4</sup>

## 5 key considerations for including eHealth as part of your protocol

1. **Have an education plan** – Learning and retaining new information can be hard when strong emotions are present. Provide a structure for sharing information that reinforces learning.

Educational materials to share with parents can be found online. For example, [Hear to Learn™](#) website is filled with user-friendly materials for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

2. **Help parents develop routines** – It can be difficult to integrate new behaviors into daily life. Help parents break down their challenges into manageable steps as they build their skills.

[Spanish](#) at no charge, and includes a provider guide.

3. **Check in with parents** – Ask parents how they are doing and what they need. Find out about their challenges. When you identify underlying challenges, you can target your support and help parents find solutions that work for them.

When using eHealth, 'checking in' can be done via phone calls in a just a few minutes. For example, a few days after fitting the hearing aids call the parent and ask how they are feeling. This is an opportunity to support them during a challenging time and show that you are there to help them work through challenges.

4. **Recognize what is going well** – It takes time to build confidence and seeing what is working can boost motivation for tackling more challenging situations.

Online tools can be used to track progress and give you and parents feedback as to what is working. For example, the Ida Institute tool '[Growing Up with Hearing Loss](#)' has resources for different age groups, starting at birth, to help parents and audiologists work together.

5. **Respond to parents' emotions** – Emotions can interfere with learning and taking needed steps to manage hearing aids. Ask

parents how they are feeling, acknowledge their fears, and help them know they have support. Taking a moment to talk about their emotions can reduce the power of the emotion, helping them tackle the challenges they are facing

and share hearing loss stories.

## A resource to help you get started

The [Hear to Learn](#) website has numerous tools for you as a professional, including resources for eHealth hearing aid management to help you get started.

eHealth offers flexibility for parents and clinicians and providing support more frequently can help parents improve their hearing aid management behaviors. You can get started today!

The **myPhonak Junior app** is an eHealth tool that can help you stay connected with children and their families in between face-to-face visits. Click [here](#) for more information.



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## *Aids: A Remote Parent Education and Support Program*

### References:

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2. Muñoz, K., San Miguel, G., Barrett, T.S., Kasin, C., Baughman, K., Reynolds, B., Ritter, C., Larsen, M., Whicker, J.J., & Twohig, M.P. (2021). eHealth Parent Education for Hearing Aid Management: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial. *International Journal of Audiology*, 60(S1), S42-S48.  
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4. World Health Organization (2005). Resolution WHO 58.28. e-health. In: Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly. Geneva: World Health Organization, pp.108-110.

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Karen Muñoz, EdD., worked as a clinical audiologist and provided clinical supervision for audiology graduate students for seventeen years before beginning her academic career in 2007. Her research focuses on understanding parent and professional factors that facilitate and/or interfere with spoken language outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

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