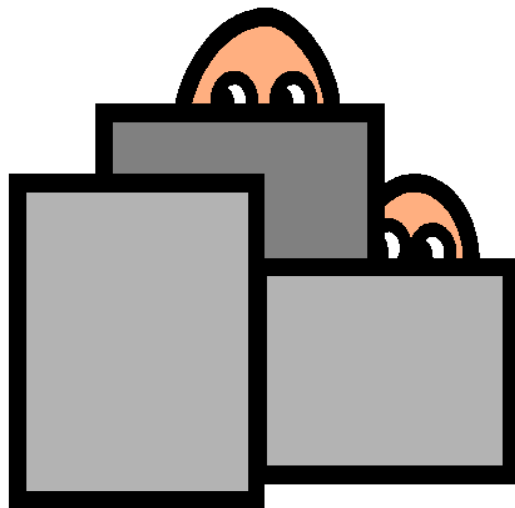




Communication Help and Awareness Team

Speech and Language Therapy



Barriers to Communication

Glue Ear, Dummies and Television



Glue Ear (Otitis Media with Effusion)

- One of the most common childhood illnesses, affecting approximately 4 out of 5 children before the age of 4 years
- It can affect behaviour and education progress
- Frequent episodes can affect speech and language development

What is Glue Ear?

- Painless condition, in which thick sticky fluid collects behind the ear drum
- The fluid blocks the middle part of the ear causing temporary partial deafness - it is 'like listening to the world with both fingers stuck in your ears'
- Glue Ear can be a mild condition which resolves by itself **OR** it can be more severe and require ENT referral
- Some children can experience glue ear more than once
- It often occurs in both ears and can be difficult to spot as it doesn't cause the symptoms of an ear infection



Signs to Look Out For

- Problems with hearing e.g. child says 'what?' or 'eh?' more often; child can't hear TV
- Changes in behaviour e.g. becomes quiet & withdrawn; more frustrated; becomes overactive and has tantrums
- Difficulties in concentrating; prone to daydreaming; appears to have selective hearing
- Talks too loudly; talks less; mispronounces words



How to Help

- Talk to your GP or Health Visitor if you think your child has Glue Ear
- Make sure adult gets child's attention before talking to him / her
- Speak clearly to the child but don't shout
- Keep instructions short and simple, using visual clues
- Keep background noise to a minimum
- Encourage your child to say if they are unable to hear what's being said
- Let people know that your child may have Glue Ear



Dummies

Dummies can be useful in settling young babies and encouraging strong sucking patterns. However after about 6 months, weaning children off dummies and using them only at bedtime is recommended.

Excessive use of dummies:

- Can lead to stomach and mouth infections
- Can put children at more risk of developing Glue Ear
- Can cause dental problems with growing teeth
- Can reduce babbling and experimentation with sounds

When a child has a dummy in their mouth, they are less likely to copy sounds adults make or attempt to babble or play with sounds themselves. This is important in the development of speech skills.



Television

Children who watch too much TV instead of playing and talking with their family are more likely to have delayed language development.

- Limit the amount of TV your child watches
- Watch TV with your child to make the experience interactive – help your child to make sense of what they see and hear