

Trafford General Hospital

Information for Patients

Sound Sensitivity

What is it?

Some children experience sensitivity to certain sounds e.g. hand dryers, hoovers or sirens. They can find these sounds uncomfortable or upsetting and typically cover their ears or start to cry.

What causes it?

Sound sensitivity can be a normal phase in a child's development. Loud and sudden sounds can be frightening if they do not fully understand where the sound has come from. Children can begin to associate fear with the situations that frightened them. If a child has had glue ear (fluid behind the ear drum) this can reduce the hearing for a period of time. Once the glue ear resolves the world can seem to be a loud place which takes some time to acclimatise to.

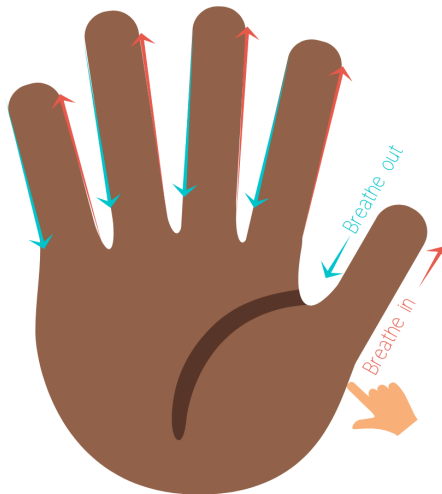
What can I do to help?

- Most children find their sensitivity to sounds gets better over time.
- Whenever possible try to provide a warning just before a noise (e.g hoover)
- We do not recommend the use of ear plugs/defenders - they can increase sensitivity and reinforce anxiety towards louder sounds in the long term
- Remove the fear factor- this can be done in a number of ways:
 - Hoover sensitivity- put some sprinkles on the floor and allow your child to Hoover them up
 - Hand dryer sensitivity- use a flower windmill and get your child to make it spin



- Siren- count how many seconds it takes for the siren to go away
- Graded exposure approach- standing at the door and letting your child take control of going into e.g a party
- Breathing techniques can provide a focus the mind and help your child feel more relaxed. Encourage your child to breathe in and out as they trace their way up and down each finger on their hand.

5 Finger Breathing



Further help

The Hyperacusis Network (www.hyperacusis.net)

Relax kids (www.relaxkids.com)

British Tinnitus Association: (www.tinnitus.org.uk)



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