

# Sports and Hearing Loss



## Potential Barriers to Playing Sports and Quick Solutions:

- Retention, the hearing aid keeps falling off during activities
  - Wig or toupee tape can be used to hold the hearing aids in place and can be changed after each quarter or period.
  - Headband to hold the hearing aids in place.
  - Hearing Technology clips: loop around the back of the hearing aid and tie around the back of the neck, similar to a cord used for retention on a pair of sunglasses.
- Distance
  - Relay system with teammates:
    - The coach can use other players to relay play calls and other messages to the player wearing hearing aids.
- Fighting the elements, moisture and dust
  - The player can put protective sleeves on the behind the ear portion of the hearing technology to protect it from any dust or debris.
- Helmets
  - The inside of helmets can be altered to make space for the hearing technology to be worn. Baseball batting helmets may only cover one ear, so hearing technology can be worn on the open ear.
- Noisy playing environments
  - Players with hearing aids may need teammates to help with relaying messages.
  - Hand signals are beneficial when instructions or scoring is not audible

## Practice:

- Playing sports with the hearing aids on and with the hearing aids off allows you to compare how each situation works for you.
  - Trying out the listening in practice with and without hearing technology gives the athlete an idea of what to expect in games and to feel more prepared.
  - Also provides a good opportunity for the teammates of the player that is hearing impaired to get comfortable using a signal system or a relay system during the game or event.
  - Good opportunity to troubleshoot the use of an FM system.

## Things to Keep in Mind:

- The officials should be notified before every single game that there is a player on the court or field that has a hearing loss and they may need to provide some leniency regarding play calls and delay of game.
- Some sports will make wearing hearing technology not possible (like swimming and wrestling) and the athlete may only need to be able to wear their hearing aids before and after their race/match.
- Hand signals are your best friend! By implementing a set of hand signals for play calls, the player with hearing aids can still communicate with the coach on the side lines as well as his or her teammates.
- Remote mic/FM-DM systems:
  - Can only be used on the court or field if the players with normal hearing can hear the coach just as well (per sports regulations), but cannot be used in sports where the access to the coach's instructions provide an unfair advantage.
  - If the coach is yelling throughout the game, the FM/DM signal will be too loud for the player.
  - Portable loop systems can be used around the bench for when the player is sitting on the bench or the coach has called a time out.
- Drying out hearing technology with use of a nightly drying kit is crucial for preventing moisture damage from perspiration.
- Coaches can help athletes by using clear and slow speech and checking with the player with hearing technology to make sure they understand what is going on.

