

Older Baby Tip Sheet

Thank you for your order. This information represents the most current advice available from Mr David Gault who developed the Ear Buddies system. Please note that there is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on the website www.earbuddies.co.uk together with a special section on older babies. There is also useful information on the website of the London Centre for Ear Reconstruction, www.earreconstruction.co.uk (in the page on prominent ears), the London base of Mr Gault.

Splintage is now endorsed by the BMJ, Bounty, the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, BUPA and ENT-UK, the British Association of Otorhinolaryngologists, and we hope that this will make the technique as acceptable and usual as braces on teeth. In the UK a recent audit of statistics by the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons showed that pinnaplasty ops fell by 20% in 2006, when most plastic surgery procedures increased by 30%, and some by as much as 90%, and we do encourage you to persevere if at all possible.

Ear Buddies are designed to be worn by newborns. Success is so much easier when the splints are applied early and we want to encourage this. Nevertheless, the splints will still fit babies up to two years old. The hats in the BK5 and GK5 kits are larger, but there is still a possibility that it will not fit your baby's head. The purpose of the hat is to cover the splints only to hide them from prying eyes – it has no therapeutic effect.

Quick Tips

- Degrease ears thoroughly with baby shampoo and allow to dry for 90 minutes
- Shave the skin if there is any hair at all where the tapes are going to stick
- Use the tapes in the pack to fix the splints to the ears
- Order Superwide tapes to fix the ears to the head
- Keep the splints and the tapes dry
- Use a barrier cream like Metanium if the ears start to look sore (usually because they have become wet)
- Remove the splints if soreness does not settle and allow to heal
- Try to keep the tapes in position for two weeks at a time
- There is no need to change the tapes just because they look grubby
- If the ends of the tapes lift but the rest is firmly stuck, simply trim the ends and apply a new tape on top if necessary
- Order adhesive remover wipes for easy tape removal

How old is an Older Baby?

We call most babies over one month of age Older Babies. Babies who are one month premature are considered to be Older Babies at six weeks of age, and so on.

What is the maximum age at which Ear Buddies™ kits can still be effective?

Our own feedback shows that Ear Buddies™ splints can be successful in babies of up to two years, and independent research into splintage in Japan shows that it can be effective in much older children and even in adults. However, **it does need perseverance**. The older your baby is, the longer the splints must be worn to take effect, and the more difficult it is. The key indicator is how flexible the cartilage is. The purpose of splintage is to form and maintain the proper contours and position of the ears whilst the cartilage hardens. Modifying these features once the cartilage is already quite hard is the reason that persistence is required in older babies.

How long will my baby have to wear Ear Buddies™ splints?

We recommend two weeks of splintage at birth, one month of splintage at one month of age, two months of splintage at two months of age, 10 weeks at three months and three months at four to six months. Babies over six months may need to wear the splints for at least four months. These times are weighted towards the generous side to ensure that you maximise the potential for improvement.

Are there special tips to make Ear Buddies™ splints work in older babies?

Your baby's skin becomes greasier and sweats more with age, and the cartilage becomes harder and more difficult to mould, so you need to clean the skin, shave any hair and keep the area dry if the tapes are to stick properly.

- Using gentle baby soap and water, "squidge" the ears between your fingers thoroughly but carefully, and allow the soap to stay on for as long as you can, then rinse. Pat the ears dry and allow the skin to dry naturally in the air for at least 90 minutes.

- It is best to shave any hair over the area where the tapes stick, no matter how fine, otherwise the tape won't stick properly. (Don't worry about shaving a baby's hair – in some countries it is done routinely, often several times before the age of one, where it is thought to improve the strength of the hair – shaving a small amount around the ears certainly will not do any harm.) Fine hair under the tapes will also prickle and attract your baby's fingers to the area, so shaving the hair where the tapes stick is one of the most important tips.
- Each pack comes with the correct combination of short and long tapes for a newborn. The short tapes would normally be used to fix the splint to the ears and the long tapes to fix the ears to the side of the head. In older babies, we recommend using both the short and long tapes in the kit to fit the splints to the ears – you can cut up the long tapes to make more short tapes. To fix the ears to the side of the head, we recommend that you order extra packs of [Superwide tapes](#). Each Superwide pack contains 8 strips 1" x 5", and is the most cost efficient way of buying extra tape for long periods of splintage - you can cut the pieces crossways to make the short strips too, if you wish.
- You might find it helpful to put an extra strip of Superwide tape at the top of the ear to obliterate the groove between the ear and the side of the head for a few days to discourage any tugging during, for example, teething. An extra parallel Superwide strip below the strip illustrated in the diagram can also be useful if the cartilage seems quite resistant and inflexible, in order to encourage it to mould.
- As babies get older, they develop the co-ordination to put their hands up to the sides of their heads, and can pull at the splints when they are first fitted. You will need to carefully ensure that they are properly fixed, so that your baby cannot move them out of position.
- It is important that the ears should not get wet whilst the splints are in place. It is best to simply top and tail baby with a damp flannel, and to give baby a really good bath and hair wash only when you change the tapes. If your baby splashes in the bath, some parents use a thin plastic shower cap of the sort that you get from a hotel, but it would be ABSOLUTELY VITAL to ensure that you make a knot in it to reduce the size TO BE CERTAIN that it does not flip over the face and cause suffocation.
- The splints can be worn continuously without discomfort. Occasionally the area between the back of the ear and the side of the head becomes a little inflamed and sometimes weepy, usually due to the close contact of two skin surfaces. If the area looks as though it might become inflamed, we would recommend a dry titanium dioxide -containing barrier cream like Metanium, applied with a cotton bud, which will protect the skin and allow it to settle. Paradoxically, children who develop this tissue reaction often achieve a better, quicker result, perhaps because of the influx of prostaglandins into the inflamed area. If the area is frankly inflamed and weeping then you must take off the splints immediately and allow the skin to heal. Only re-apply when it is completely better.
- We would recommend that you try to keep the tapes in place for two to three weeks at a time. Change the tapes only when they are no longer doing their job, and not simply because they look a little dog-eared and grubby. By the time you first do this, you should see the beginnings of what can be achieved. In newborns, you can normally make a single application do the trick, but in babies older than two to three weeks, you will normally have to change the tapes at least once, depending on their age.
- You can change the long tape only, if the short tapes are adhering well. We recommend leaving the part which is adhering well in situ, trimming the non-adherent part, and then attaching a new tape over the top. This can allow good fixation for another few weeks, after which the whole lot can be soaked off in the bath. Our Adhesive Remove Wipes make this even easier. In older babies with more greasy skin, the natural oils soak into the tapes and they should lift off without causing your baby distress.
- If your baby swims, you will need to remove the splints beforehand and re-apply afterwards, to avoid their loss in the pool.

What are the alternatives to Ear Buddies™ splints?

The alternatives are camouflage, usually with a hair style, or surgery. There is no upper age limit to surgery, and indeed, many adult males have surgery when their hair begins to thin. The earliest age at which surgery can be contemplated is 5 years. Earlier than this and the cartilage is too soft to hold the stitches without tearing. The safest option for surgery is under local anaesthetic, with or without mild sedation. Many children can tolerate this from the age of 10, but if not, a general anaesthetic will be required. Because of the risk of haematoma and ensuing infection (see Bat to Worse presentation on the home page), Mr Gault advises against the use of anterior scoring of the ear cartilage, and advocates, instead, a suture technique.

If you wish to have your baby seen and Ear Buddies fitted by Mr Gault himself, he can be consulted at the Portland and the Bishops Wood Hospitals and the Cadogan Clinic – www.davidgault.co.uk.