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Popping device is 'cure' for glue ear

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A BATTERY-OPERATED device could treat glue ear and other common ear complaints without the need for surgery or drugs.

The handheld **EarPopper** performed spectacularly well in tests, rapidly restoring normal hearing in nine out of ten people whose hearing had been affected by a build-up of fluid.

The prescription-only device was designed for children and adults with any one of a number of conditions, including glue ear and Aerotitis, the popping condition often linked to a plane's rapid ascent or descent.

'It will bring relief to millions of children who are suffering hearing loss and may be experiencing educational, emotional, academic and behavioral challenges,' says Dr Shlomo Silman, a hearing specialist and co-inventor of the **EarPopper**.

Glue ear is one of the most common childhood illnesses. This chronic inflammation of the middle ear is accompanied by a build-up of fluid.

While not usually painful, it can cause loss of hearing which can lead to speech and language delay and learning difficulties. Current treatments range from antibiotics to the surgical insertion of ear tubes or grommets to prevent fluid build-up.

The **EarPopper** uses a process called insufflation of the middle ear.

It sends air into the Eustachian tube - which connects the back of the nose to the middle ear - which allows it to open and ventilate the middle ear behind the eardrum.

After two to three seconds of using the nine-volt battery-operated device, the patient swallows with their mouth shut while the device is running. This forces air up the Eustachian tube, clearing and ventilating the middle ear, which relieves the negative ear pressure and allows any fluid to drain.

Micromedics, the company which has launched the device, says that frequently repeating the treatment over a few weeks can result in elimination of middle ear problems.

As well as glue ear, the **EarPopper** can be used to treat Eustachian tube dysfunction, a condition that can cause development of negative pressure in the middle ear due to a lack of ventilation and lead to an uncomfortable, blocked feeling in one or both ears.