



# Hearing Loss

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information. Please talk with your child's doctor or pediatric audiologist to get more specific information. Call **813-262-1330** to schedule an appointment.

## What is hearing loss?

Most children have normal hearing, but some are born with hearing loss. Hearing loss is when your child may not be able to hear sounds at certain pitches. A child may have:

- A hearing loss in only the high pitches
- A temporary or permanent hearing loss
- A hearing loss in one or both ears

## What are the possible symptoms of hearing loss?

Your child may have one or more of these:

- Not respond well to sound
- Have poor speech skills
- Turn music and the television up too loud
- Have problems following directions

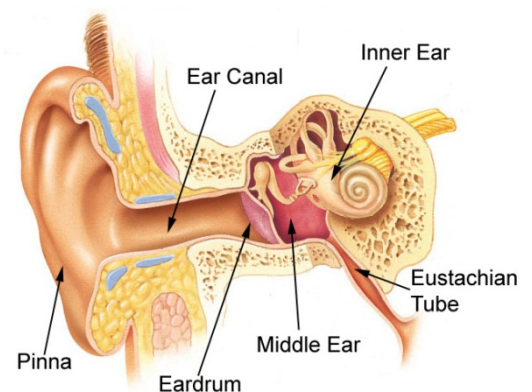
The effect of a hearing loss depends on how much hearing loss your child has. Your child can have a hearing test at any age. Hearing aids can be fit on any child who needs them, including babies so that they can begin hearing speech sounds better.

## What are the degrees (amounts) of hearing loss?

- Mild hearing loss: Your child will have trouble listening when it's noisy. He/she may miss a lot of consonant sounds and may not be able to hear f, s, or th sounds.
- Moderate hearing loss: Your child will only be able to understand speech if he/she can see the speaker's face.
- Severe hearing loss: Your child may miss most or all of the speech sounds, even if he/she can see the speaker's face. He/she may not hear voices unless the speech is very loud.
- Profound hearing loss: Your child may not be able to hear even very loud sounds, like a fire truck. He/she may respond mostly to vibrations and to things they can see.

## What are types and causes of hearing loss?

- Conductive hearing loss: This type of hearing loss is caused by a problem in the outer and/or middle ear such as an ear infection, wax blockage, certain syndromes, outer or middle ear deformity.
- Sensorineural hearing loss: This type of hearing loss is caused by a problem in the inner ear or the hearing nerve such as an inherited hearing loss, hearing loss caused by listening to loud noise or music, certain syndromes, or a certain disease during pregnancy. If a child was born extremely early, had a low birth weight, severe jaundice at birth, meningitis, a head injury, inner ear deformity, or absent hearing nerve, they are at risk for this type of hearing loss.
- Mixed hearing loss: This type of hearing loss is caused by a problem in the outer/middle and inner ears such as an inherited hearing loss that is made worse by an ear infection.



- Central hearing loss: This type of hearing loss is caused by the brain having difficulty processing speech sounds. An example is a child with an Auditory Processing Disorder (APD). With APD, a child may have normal hearing, but may not be able to understand all of the sounds he/she hears.
- Auditory Neuropathy: This type of hearing loss is caused by how the sound passes between the inner ear and the hearing nerve. Auditory neuropathy affects each child differently. Some children have normal hearing, but have difficulty understanding others in noisy places. Other children hear poorly and have poor understanding of what others say. Auditory neuropathy can be caused by jaundice, premature birth, or low birth weight.

### **How can I find out the cause of my child's hearing loss?**

Your child's Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) doctor can sometimes tell the cause of a hearing loss or can order additional tests to determine the cause.

- A CT scan or MRI can look at the inside of the ears and how they are formed. If they are not formed correctly, this may be the reason your child has a hearing loss.
- Genetic testing with blood samples can sometimes tell if the hearing loss was inherited.
- Your child's doctor may also order an EKG (electrocardiogram) and a kidney test.
- Sometimes the cause of your child's hearing loss will remain unknown.

### **What is the treatment for hearing loss?**

- Conductive hearing loss: these are usually temporary and can be treated by a doctor. If your child has an ear infection, they may have a hearing loss. When the ear infection resolves, their hearing may return to normal. Some children have permanent conductive hearing loss which may be related to a problem in their outer or middle ear. These children may be able to wear hearing aids.
- Sensorineural hearing loss: these are usually permanent and can be helped by wearing hearing aids or cochlear implants. Speech therapy or auditory verbal therapy may help children with this type of hearing loss.

A child with a hearing loss can be helped at any age.

- Have your child see an audiologist (a person who checks and manages hearing loss) **at least once a year**.
- The earlier your child gets help, the better his/her speech and communication skills will be.