



What To Do If Your Child Has a 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.

When you find out your child has hearing loss, it is normal to be sad and to grieve. Having a hearing loss does not mean that your child cannot have a normal life, go to college, or have a full and rich career. It takes hard work, but we can help you through the process.

What steps do I take first?

1. See your child's Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) doctor.
 - The ENT doctor will check your child's ears.
 - Your child may need to have more tests such as a CT scan to look at the inner ears and try to find out why your child has a hearing loss.
2. Have your child's vision tested. His/her vision is very important because of the hearing loss. Your child will need to rely more on their vision to fill in the parts they miss during conversations.
3. Take your child for a speech and language evaluation.
 - Children who cannot hear normally often have difficulty producing speech sounds correctly.
 - Speech therapy can help your child learn to produce sounds better.
4. Have your other children complete a hearing test. Some hearing problems may be genetic (passed from parents to child).
 - Consider genetic testing unless you know that your child's hearing loss is related to something else.
 - It can sometimes help you to know what to expect if you have more children or if your child has children.

How can I communicate with my child?

Communication strategies are helpful ways to talk to your child. A few strategies that may be helpful are listed in the table below.

Children with hearing loss:	Examples of strategies you can use:
Depend more on sight than children with normal hearing	Get your child's attention and have him/her look at you before you begin talking
Are unable to hear as well when it gets noisy	Cut down on background noise by turning off the TV, radio, and other noises when you speak to your child
Need more time to process what is said	Speak slowly and clearly to your child
Need to be close to the person speaking	Make sure your child sits close to the teacher at school and don't talk to your child from across the house

What method should I use to teach and communicate with my child?

There are different ways to teach and communicate with your child – no one way is best. It's up to you to decide what is best for your child and your family. Some methods are listed below:

- **Auditory-Verbal Method:** teaches your child to use their hearing (while wearing hearing aids or cochlear implants) to listen and speak. Your child will not sign.
 - These children can usually be in a regular classroom at school.
 - You will need to learn this method so that you can work with your child at home practicing listening activities. This method involves intensive therapy so that your child can speak like a normal hearing child speaks.
- **Auditory-Oral Method:** uses speech, hearing, and lip-reading. Your child will not sign.
 - Your child may be in a special classroom at school and may be able to move to a regular classroom once he/she is able.

- Total Communication: uses sign language and speech at the same time.
 - You will need to sign while you talk
 - Your child may need to be in a special classroom and have an interpreter.
- Manual Communication: uses sign language
 - You will need to learn sign language in order to communicate with your child for this method.
 - Your child may need to be in a special classroom and have an interpreter.
- Cued Speech: uses speech with special hand position by the mouth.
 - You will need to learn to cue.
 - Your child will need a cued speech interpreter at school.

Can my child take part in outside activities?

Children with all types of hearing loss can take part in many activities.

- Make sure your child takes part in activities that interest him/her.
- Talk with your child’s audiologist about how to make the most of the activities for your child.

Are there any safety concerns related to my child’s hearing loss?

Depending on how much hearing loss your child has, he/she may not be startled by warning signals like a fire alarm or a car driving down the street. This means that you must be aware of possible dangers and do your best to keep your child safe, even when his/her hearing aids are on.

- Install smoke detectors that light up in your home.
- Your child may have trouble telling which direction a sound is coming from and how close it is. Teach him/her to always look for cars in the street and how to cross safely.