

A Guide to Childhood Hearing Loss

Highlights

Hearing loss in children can range from mild to severe and can be temporary or permanent.

Hearing loss can be caused by different things, including genetics, infections, an injury or wax build-up.

Early diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss is important to help your child develop their communication skills.

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Understanding childhood hearing impairment

Different forms of hearing impairment

outer ear \ (ear canal and pinna\)

middle ear \ (eardrum, ear bones, and eustachian tube\)

inner ear \ (cochlear and hearing nerve\)

conductive hearing loss

sensorineural hearing loss

mixed hearing loss

Common causes of hearing difficulties

Wax blockage

Middle ear infection \ (otitis media\)

Fluid build-up in the middle ear

Damaged

Incorrectly formed

A problem with the development of the inner ear

A physical injury to the head or inner ear

Damage to the ear from a disease such as meningitis

Excessive exposure to loud noise

Genetics

An infection during pregnancy, like rubella

Problems due to preterm birth

Detecting hearing problems early

Reacting to loud noises by 3 months of age

Noticing when you speak by 3 months

Turning to where sounds are coming from and babbling by 6 to 12 months

Responding to their name by 6 to 18 months

Being able to speak simple words and follow simple instructions by 12 to 24 months

Hearing some sounds but not others
Appearing inattentive

Assessing your child's hearing

An audiologist - a health professional who provides advice, education, and treatment for hearing problems

A paediatrician \ (children's doctor)

An ear, nose, and throat specialist

Treatment and intervention options

Hearing aids, or other technology to amplify sounds or assist hearing

A cochlear implant for severe or profound hearing loss

Spoken language

Sign language

A combination of sign and spoken language

Removal of a foreign object or wax

Medications like antibiotics for ear infections

Grommets \ (tubes that help drain fluid from the ear) may be recommended for repeated ear infections

Hearing tests

Eye examinations

Appointments with a paediatrician

Preventing hearing damage

Protecting your child's ears from infection and loud noises

Vaccinating your child against: Rubella Measles Mumps Meningitis

Rubella

Measles

Mumps

Meningitis

Rubella
Measles
Mumps
Meningitis

Concerts
Sporting events
Fireworks
Power tools

Potential impacts of untreated hearing loss

Tools and assistance

Hearing Awareness: Websites, forums, and support groups for parents of children with hearing loss.

Audiologists: Professionals who can provide customized hearing aids or cochlear implants, and recommend early intervention strategies.

Speech Therapy: Access to speech therapists who specialize in helping children with hearing impairments develop language skills.

Parenting Resources: Educational materials and workshops to assist parents in understanding and managing hearing loss in children.

Educational Support: Assistance from specialized teachers of the deaf to help your child with communication and integration into learning environments.