

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Hearing loss in one ear: babies & pre-school children

Many babies who are born with hearing loss in one ear are now identified in the first few months of life by the newborn hearing screening program (SWISH). If your child has had a 'refer' result in one ear through the newborn hearing screening program your child should have a repeat screening test arranged by the SWISH co-ordinator in your area. If the repeat hearing screen does not show a clear result, your baby will be referred for a diagnostic hearing test by an audiologist. Even if your baby's hearing screen is normal at birth, it is still possible for a young child to develop hearing loss in one (or both) ears later on.

About 1 baby in every 500 births will have a hearing loss in one ear.

Children who have a hearing loss in one ear should be assessed by a paediatric audiologist (a person who tests children's hearing) and an Ear Nose and Throat Specialist doctor or a paediatrician.

Hearing testing for older babies and preschoolers can be arranged at:

- Some Community Health Centres.
- Some Audiology Units at hospitals
- Some Ear Nose and Throat Specialists' rooms.
- Some Australian Hearing Centres

Your family doctor can refer your older child to an Audiologist as well as an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist Doctor (ENT) or paediatrician for a medical review

What could I notice at home?

- Most parents will not notice any problems with their baby's hearing in the first few months of life as babies

are often in a quiet area and held close when spoken to.

- As your child starts to walk and explore surroundings he/she may have difficulty hearing you if they are further away or in a noisy room.
- Your child may find it hard to hear you talk when you are driving and he/she cannot see your face.
- If your child has a cold and has fluid causing temporary blocking in one or both ears they may not be able to hear some of what is said to them.
- If your child has a hearing loss in one ear, they will often have trouble picking the direction from which sounds are coming. Because your child will hear everything well in the better hearing ear, all sounds will seem to be coming from that side. This is another reason why children can seem very inconsistent in their response to voices and other sounds.

There is some evidence to show that whilst some children with hearing loss in one ear develop normally, others do not. It is important to get information about support for your baby and how to protect the better hearing ear both at home and at school. For example, your child should be encouraged to sit at the front of the classroom as if the person sitting next to their better hearing ear is making a noise, they cannot turn their head to compensate for the hearing loss in the other ear.

Research has shown some (and certainly not all) school aged children with hearing loss in one ear had problems with:

- learning to read.
- spelling and writing stories.
- doing maths.

However, the steps described below can prevent or lessen any problems that do occur.

My child has a hearing loss in one ear - How can I help?

- When you want your child to listen to you, choose a quiet place away from noises so they can hear you better.
- Position your child with their hearing ear directed toward the sound you want heard.
- When feeding your baby face their better hearing ear so it is exposed to sound.
- Stay close when talking to your child, but don't shout. Being closer will make your speech louder. You may need to be even closer in a noisy room.
- Make sure your child can see your face when you are talking, so that they can see your lips and gestures. You may need to turn the lights on.
- Repeat and emphasise any key words when talking to your child.
- Make an appointment with an audiologist at Australian Hearing and ask about the latest appropriate listening devices that might help your child hear sounds more easily.
- Attend regular hearing checks with an audiologist at Australian Hearing or with your hospital audiologist. It is important that you know if there is any change in the hearing level in either of your child's ears. Children with hearing loss in one ear should have a hearing test every year.
- It is important to get treatment quickly for ear infections to reduce the amount of time your child will have additional hearing loss.
- Your child's hearing is very precious. Always use noise protection for both ears and avoid loud noise whenever possible.
- As your child begins to crawl and walk, be aware of safety, as your child may not hear warning sounds as easily.

Will my child's other ear develop a hearing loss?

We know that some children who have a hearing loss in one ear may develop some hearing loss in their other ear. If you have any concerns that your child's hearing appears to be getting worse then you should see your audiologist straight away. If the audiologist confirms that either the hearing is worse or that the other ear has a hearing loss then you should see your ENT specialist, paediatrician or family doctor as soon as possible.

What about other education services?

Some children may need extra support for language and learning even before school. If you have any concerns about your child's speech or understanding, or would like further information or guidance about your child's progress then you could contact a service that provides early help for children who have hearing loss. The audiologist, ENT specialist or paediatrician can give you information on the services in your area.

Remember:

- See your doctor quickly for ear infections. If the hearing seems to be worse there may be blocking or infection in either ear.
- Your child may have trouble hearing sounds from a distance and also in noisy places.
- Make sure you have your child's attention before talking to him/her.
- Your child needs regular hearing checks. If you are concerned that the hearing is worse contact your audiologist and doctor straight away.