



Your Baby Has a Hearing Loss

Parent Information

Leaflet C

Your Baby Has a Hearing Loss

Parents and families have many questions when they find out their baby has a hearing loss. This booklet answers some common questions. It also tells you about some of the support available for you and your baby and gives details of where you can go for further information.

I have heard the term deaf. Does that mean my baby cannot hear any sounds?

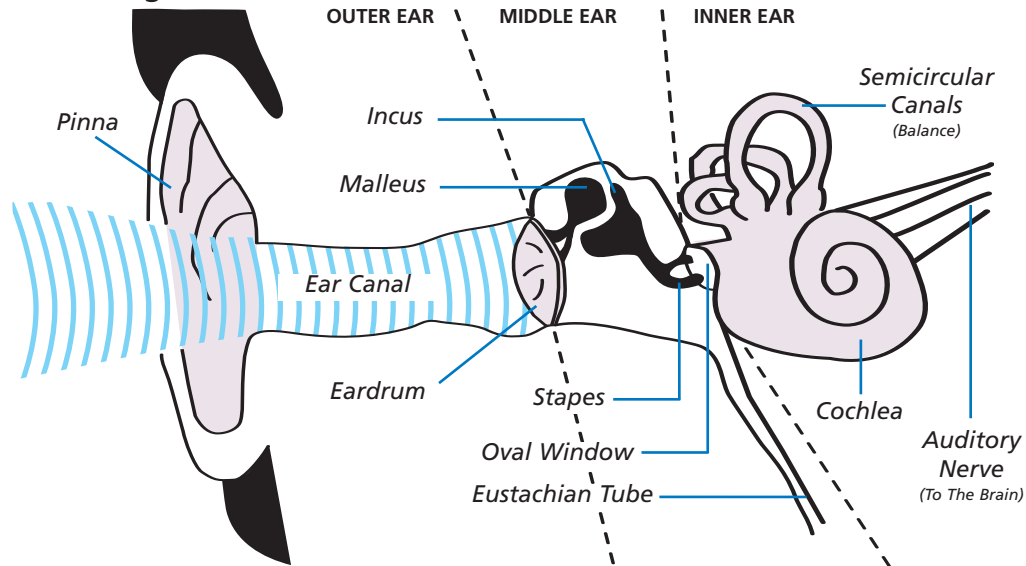
It is very unlikely that your baby will not be able to hear any sounds at all. The term 'deaf' can mean all types and levels of hearing loss. Other terms include 'hearing impaired' and 'hard of hearing.'

If you are unsure about your baby's hearing loss, ask your audiologist. They can explain the results of your baby's hearing tests. They will also be able to explain which sounds your baby can hear and which sounds they may find difficult to hear.

I was told that my child has a sensori-neural hearing loss. What does this mean?

Sensori-neural deafness, sometimes called 'nerve deafness', is a hearing loss in the inner ear. This usually means that the part of the inner ear called the cochlea is not working effectively. The ear is split into three parts. These are called: the outer ear; the middle ear; and the inner ear. Each of these parts has a different role to play in hearing.

Diagram of Ear



The audiologist told me that my baby has a high frequency hearing loss. What does this mean?

Different sounds have different loudness or volume, and different frequency or pitch. Your baby may be able to hear some frequencies of sound better than others or their hearing loss may affect all the different frequencies equally.

If your baby has difficulty hearing high frequency sounds then this would be described as a high frequency hearing loss.

There are also different levels of hearing loss. These can be described as mild, moderate, severe and profound. Your audiologist will be able to explain which sounds your baby can hear and which sounds they may have difficulty hearing.

For more information about your baby's hearing screening test contact:

Copyright NHS Newborn Hearing Screening Programme 2007

MORE INFORMATION

Please send me (please tick the boxes)

Family Information Pack

Information about different types of hearing loss, communication, education, technology, financial support and the range of NDCS services.

☐

Understanding Deafness

A booklet describing the different types of hearing tests and hearing loss.

☐

A Guide to Hearing Aids

A guide to the different types of children's hearing aids, how they work and how to maintain them.

☐

Name

Address

Postcode

The National Deaf Children's Society

If you would like to receive more information about childhood deafness and how the NDCS can support you, please complete the form above and post it to:

The National Deaf Children's Society
15 Dufferin Street, London EC1Y 8UR

You can also contact the NDCS by:

Freephone Helpline: 0808 800 8880 (voice and text)

E-mail: helpline@ndcs.org.uk

Fax: 020 7251 5020

Website: www.ndcs.org.uk

What is a conductive hearing loss?

There is another type of hearing loss called conductive deafness. This means that sound is unable to pass through the outer and middle ear to the inner ear. It can be caused by blockages such as wax in the outer ear. In children it is more commonly caused by fluid in the middle ear (known as 'glue ear'). This is very common and the hearing loss is temporary. It is possible to have a permanent conductive hearing loss, but this is rare.

Children with sensori-neural deafness can also have a temporary conductive hearing loss. This is called a 'mixed' hearing loss.

For further information about different types of hearing loss contact the National Deaf Children's Society and ask for a copy of their booklet - *Understanding Deafness*.

Will my baby have to wear hearing aids?

Your audiologist will discuss with you whether hearing aids would be helpful for your baby. If your baby needs hearing aids, the audiologist will take a mould of your baby's ears to get the exact size and shape. This mould is used to make your baby's ear moulds. An ear mould is the part of the hearing aid which fits into your baby's ear. When the ear moulds are ready you will be given an appointment to bring your baby back to the clinic. The ear moulds and hearing aids will be fitted at this appointment. Hearing aids will not be painful or uncomfortable for your baby to wear.

Your baby will get most benefit from hearing aids when they are worn regularly over a period of time. Your audiologist can help you make the best use of your baby's hearing aids.

Why does my baby have a hearing loss?

There are many reasons why a baby can have a hearing loss. Most babies with a hearing loss are born into families with no experience or history of deafness. Sensori-neural hearing loss can be caused by a number of things. These include genetic factors, complications at birth, premature birth, infections such as rubella caught during pregnancy, and childhood illnesses such as mumps, measles or meningitis. It is not always possible to discover the cause of hearing loss. If you would like further information about the causes of hearing loss contact your audiology clinic.

When the audiologist told me that my baby had a hearing loss I was really shocked. Do other parents feel like this?

All parents react differently and can feel a range of emotions. This is how one parent described her feelings, *"When we saw the audiological specialist our world was shattered - he told us our child was deaf."*

However, she also recalls, *"The audiologist's words as I left the clinic have remained with me ever since and have given me the strength to be positive. He said, 'Just remember the little boy you are going home with is the same one you came in with.'"*

Another parent recalls being told, *"Don't forget that he's a child first".* She says, *"I found it very hard at the time because all we could see was the deafness. Now I'm beginning to understand that it is true. He is a little boy first, and his deafness is just a small obstacle."*

Notes



What support is available?

Your audiology department will continue to provide you with support. It will also contact your local education service and arrange for a specialist support worker to contact you. This can be a Teacher of the Deaf or another Early Years support worker. Your audiology department will be able to tell you who it will be.

The role of this worker is to support you, your baby and the rest of the family. They will try to answer your questions, discuss communication and offer practical support. It will also be able to tell you about other support in your area, including Social Services support.

There are a variety of other services and organisations that can provide support to you and your baby. Ask your support worker or audiology department for further information.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) has a Freephone Helpline for parents with deaf children. The contact details are at the end of this leaflet. Their experienced advisors can help answer any questions you may have and put you in touch with other parents with deaf children through a network of local support groups.



"She ... is going on to Brownies in September. I could never have imagined that could happen when she was first diagnosed. She's just a very happy all-round person."

Whatever your feelings, it is important to acknowledge and share them, and remember there is plenty of support available to help you. Contact details are available at the end of this booklet.

How will my child communicate?

There are lots of different ways in which deaf children can learn to communicate. Some children will learn to use speech, some will learn to use sign language and some will use a mixture of both. It does not matter which kind of communication you use as long as it works for you, your child and your family.

The decision about which communication method you and your child use does not have to be made now. It will depend on your child's individual needs. There are plenty of people who can give you advice and

information. Contact details are available at the end of this booklet.

While your baby is very young it is important to continue to communicate with them in a way that works for both of you.

Try and make sure you face your baby, are at their level when you talk and use lots of facial expression.

Are there special toys for my child?

Like all babies, your baby will love toys. You don't have to worry about finding special toys, just choose the ones they like and find interesting. Your child may like toys with bright colours, moving elements, and different shapes and textures.

I don't know any deaf people. What will it mean for my child as he grows up?

Most people do not have any experience of deafness. A father remembers thinking, *'Will my son be able to play football? Do deaf people play rugby?'*

Deaf children go to school, they play sport, they go to clubs after school, many go on to college or university, or go straight into work. These are some quotes from parents with deaf children.

"He's a lovely lad (most of the time) with loads of determination and a very strong personality, who shouts just as loud and clearly as everyone else from the football stadium."

"My son can do anything - go to work, drive a car, get married, have children. Just a normal life! When he was diagnosed we had all these fears. Would everything be normal? Other than using sign language to communicate our lives are just the same as everyone else's."

Where will my child go to school?

Most deaf children go to local mainstream schools. Some children go to mainstream schools with specialist support and some go to special schools for deaf children. It is important that your child gets the right support in a school which can meet their individual needs.