



Your Baby Has a Mild Hearing Loss

Parent Information

Leaflet D

Your Baby Has a Mild 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 been told that my baby has a mild hearing loss. What does this mean?

A mild hearing loss means that your baby's hearing is slightly below the level that is considered normal. Your baby has a good degree of useful hearing but may have difficulty hearing quieter sounds. Your baby may also find it harder to follow a speaker's voice if they are more than about 1.5 metres (five feet) away, or if there is a lot of background noise.

If you are unsure about any aspect of your baby's hearing loss speak to your audiologist who can explain the results of your baby's hearing tests. The audiologist will be able to explain the sounds your baby can hear and those they may find difficult to hear.

Why does my baby have a mild hearing loss?

A mild hearing loss can be caused by different factors:

- It can be inherited. This means the gene for a hearing loss can be passed down through either the mother or the father (even if no one else in the family has a hearing loss). In some cases the combination of the parents' genes can result in a hearing loss.
- It can be caused by problems during pregnancy or birth.
- It may also develop following an illness, such as mumps or meningitis.

It is not always possible to identify the cause of a hearing loss. If you want to know more about looking into the cause of your baby's hearing loss your audiologist, doctor specialising in audiology, or ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor, will be able to give you more information.

"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."

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



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NOTES

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:

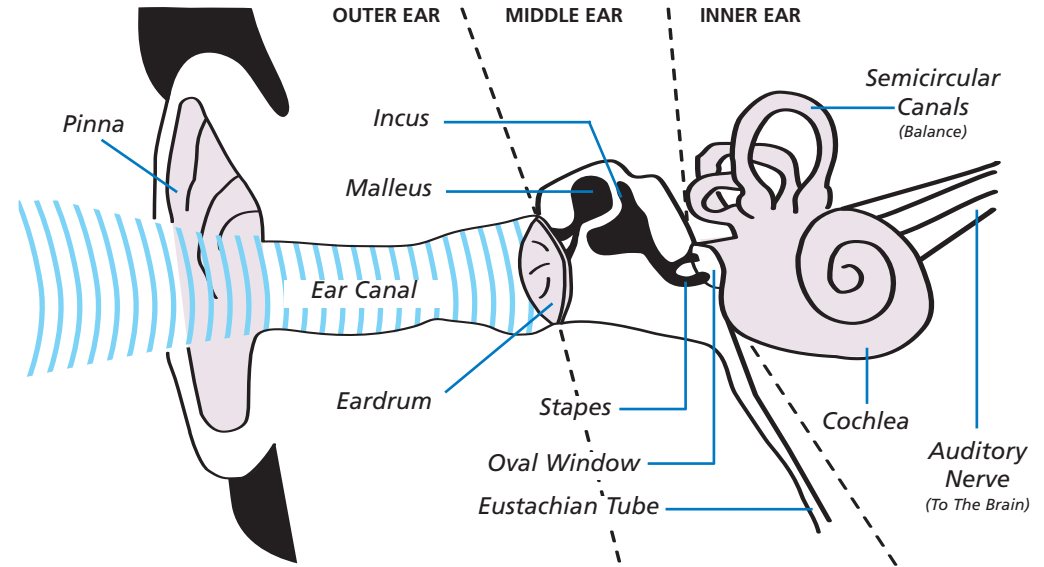
Freephone Helpline: 0808 800 8880 (voice and text)

E-mail: helpline@ndcs.org.uk

Fax: 020 7251 5020

Website: www.ndcs.org.uk

Diagram of Ear



What is a hearing loss?

There are two main types of hearing loss, sensori-neural and conductive. Sometimes a person may have both types of loss in the same ear, this is called a mixed hearing loss. Each type of hearing loss has different causes and implications for your baby. This booklet will focus mainly on the issues around a mild sensori-neural hearing loss.

What is a sensori-neural hearing loss?

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. A sensori-neural hearing loss 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.

What is a conductive hearing loss?

A conductive hearing loss 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 (when the fluid is thick this is 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 a sensori-neural hearing loss can also have a temporary conductive hearing loss.

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

How will having a mild hearing loss affect my baby?

A baby with a mild hearing loss will usually be able to hear normal speech in a quiet environment. Some babies may have more difficulty recognising sounds when listening with a lot of background noise.

A baby with a mild hearing loss will hear some sounds easily but will not necessarily be able to hear all sounds. If your baby is not close to the source of sound it may be more difficult for them to hear. If you have any questions about your baby's level of hearing then contact your audiology clinic.

What support is available?

Your audiology clinic will continue to provide you with advice and is responsible for the ongoing management of your child's hearing loss. This can include hearing tests and the fitting and maintenance of hearing aids. If your child is fitted with hearing aids, the hearing aids, batteries and any related spare parts are provided free of charge.

The audiology clinic will also be able to refer your child to a doctor who specialises in audiology or to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor. They can give you information about the medical aspects of your child's hearing loss. They may also be involved in trying to establish the cause of your child's hearing loss.

Your Local Authority hearing impairment support service will be able to provide you with information and advice about developing language and communication in the early years. They can also give advice to your

child's nursery or others who are involved in the care of your child. Your audiology clinic will be able to give you contact details of your local service.

Your Local Authority will also usually provide any equipment that your child needs at nursery or school. They can also advise you on education provision and other services in your area.

Social Services has a responsibility to assess what specialist equipment your child might need to use at home. They can also give you information and advice on what benefits your child may be entitled to, as well as other services and support in your area.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) has a Freephone Helpline that you can ring. They can provide you with support and information on the issues affecting your child.

What will it mean as my child grows up?

It is important that your child's hearing loss is recognised and supported. With the appropriate support a mild hearing loss should not stop your child reaching their potential.

What happens if my child's hearing changes?

If you suspect your child's hearing has altered then contact your audiology clinic. It is advisable for your child to have regular hearing checks even if you do not suspect that your child's hearing has altered.

Will a hearing aid be helpful for my baby?

Some babies with a mild hearing loss can benefit from wearing hearing aids. Your audiologist will be able to advise you if hearing aids may be able to help your baby to hear better.

Being in a noisy place can make listening difficult even for babies who are wearing hearing aids. Hearing aids are at their most effective when your baby is in a good listening environment.

Sounds 'bounce' on hard surfaces and this may make it harder for your baby to listen.

An example of a good listening environment is a room with soft furnishings such as carpet and curtains, all of which absorb sounds. The environment will be improved by there being no background noise so your baby will be able to focus on what they are listening to. For example, you could turn off the TV or washing machine.



Your baby may find it hard to pick out speech from background noise when they are wearing their hearing aids in group situations, for example, at a birthday party or in a noisy café. This is because hearing aids amplify all sounds not just speech.

What can I do to make listening easier for my baby?

Difficult listening conditions, such as when there is background noise, can make it more difficult for your baby to hear. For instance, when you are in a supermarket you may notice your baby finds it harder to pay attention to you than when you are together at home.

It's a good idea to try to reduce background noise when possible. For example, at home you can close doors, turn off televisions, radios and kitchen appliances when they are not in use. This will cut noise levels and help your baby to hear more clearly.

Below are some tips to help your baby hear more effectively:

- Try to make sure you have eye contact when you want your baby's attention.
- Move away from noises when you want your baby to listen to you and come even closer in a noisy room or environment.
- Try to keep close to your baby when you are speaking.
- If possible use carpets and curtains in your home. Sounds 'bounce' off hard surfaces such as wooden floors and make it more difficult to hear.
- In some circumstances a hearing aid can help a baby to hear more easily.

How can I speak to my baby to make my words clearer?

- Make sure you have your baby's attention before you start speaking.
- Good eye contact is important when you are communicating with your baby.
- Make your speech a little louder by getting closer to your baby rather than raising your voice.
- It is useful if you use gestures and appropriate facial expressions to show when you are asking questions, feeling angry or happy etc. This will support what you are saying.
- Try to make sure there is good lighting and that your face is not in shadow. This is best achieved by not standing with the light, from a lamp or daylight from a window or glass door, behind you.

- Speak clearly, naturally and at a normal pace. Speaking too slowly or shouting will distort the quality of the sound your baby hears.

When I was told that my baby had a mild hearing loss I was shocked. How do other parents react?

All parents react differently and can feel a range of emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

Whatever your feelings, it is important to acknowledge and share them and remember there is plenty of support available to help you.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) has a Freephone Helpline that you can ring. NDCS advisers offer support and advice and can answer any questions you have about a mild hearing loss. Contact details are at the end of this booklet.