



Your Baby Has a Hearing Loss in One Ear

Parent Information

Leaflet E

Your Baby Has a Hearing Loss in One Ear

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 unilateral hearing loss, what does this mean?

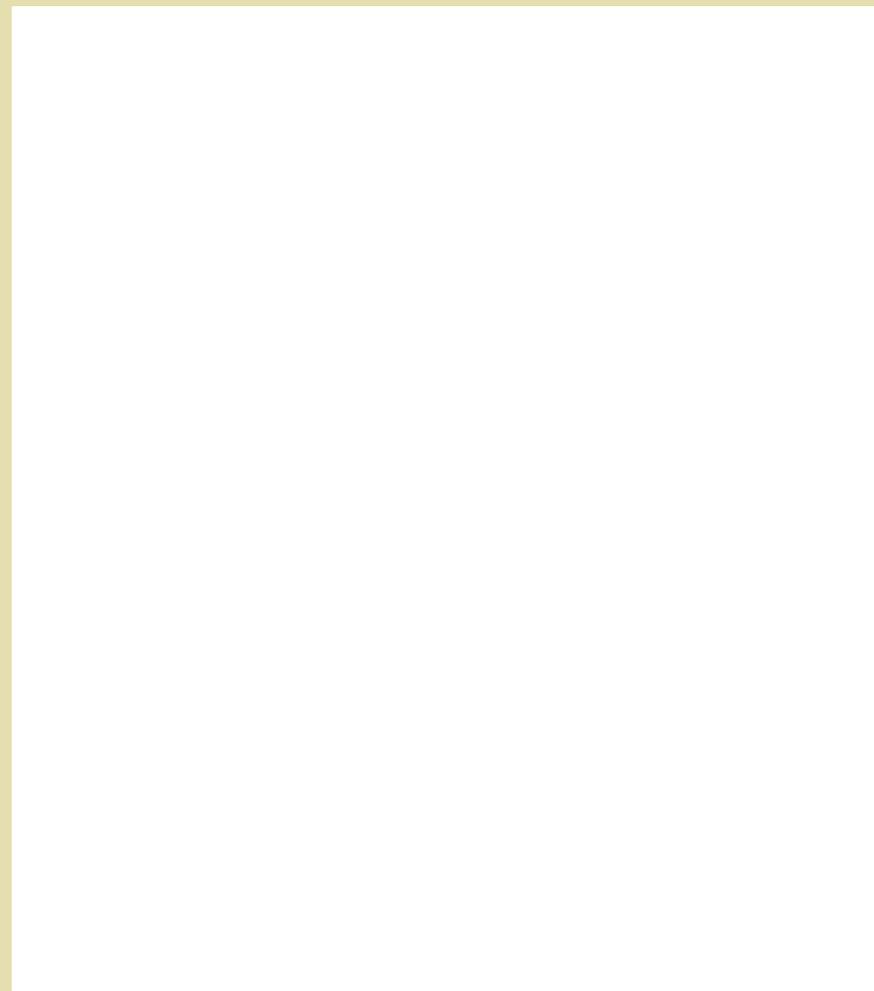
This means your baby has a hearing loss in one ear only. You may also hear it referred to as a one-sided or monaural hearing loss. There are different levels of hearing loss, described as mild, moderate, severe and profound. A unilateral hearing loss can be at any of these levels in one ear.

Your audiologist will be able to give you more information about the level of your baby's hearing loss. If your baby has only recently been identified as having a unilateral hearing loss, the audiologist may need to do more tests before they can give you this information. Your baby's audiologist will also be able to put you in touch with other people who can help.

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



**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:

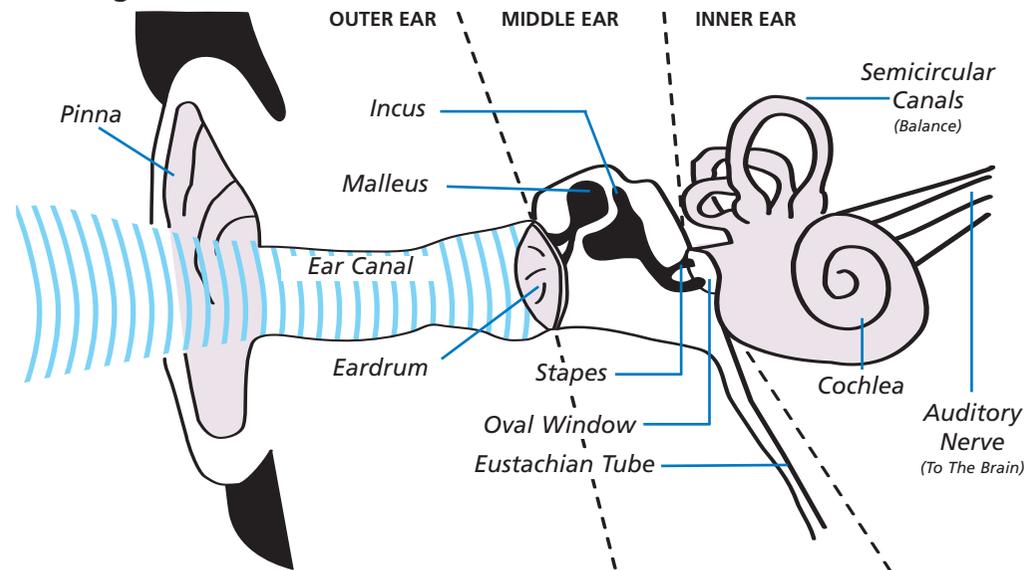
Freephone Helpline: 0808 800 8880 (voice and text)

E-mail: helpline@ndcs.org.uk

Fax: 020 7251 5020

Website: www.ndcs.org.uk

Diagram of Ear



Why does my baby have a unilateral hearing loss?

A unilateral hearing loss can be caused by different factors:

- It can be inherited. This means the gene for a hearing loss can be passed down from 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 later following an illness, such as mumps or meningitis.

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

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.

What is a sensori-neural hearing loss?

The ear is made up of 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*.

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 a hearing aid. If your child is fitted with a hearing aid, the hearing aid, batteries and any related spare parts, are provided free of charge.

The audiology clinic may also be able to refer your child to a doctor who specialises in audiology or an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor. They can give information about the many 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.

You may be referred to your Local Authority hearing impairment support service. It provides information and advice about developing language and communication in the early years. It 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.

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 services and support in your area.

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

Where will my child go to nursery and later on to school?

Children with a unilateral hearing loss who don't have additional needs go to mainstream nurseries and schools. It is important that your child's school is aware of their hearing loss so that they can support your child's individual needs.

When I was told that my baby had a unilateral 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 call. NDCS

advisers offer support and advice and can answer any questions you have about a unilateral hearing loss. Contact details are at the end of this booklet.

What will a unilateral hearing loss mean as my child grows up?

It is important that your child's hearing loss is recognised and supported. With the appropriate support a unilateral hearing loss should not stop your child from 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 think your child's hearing has altered.

How will having a unilateral hearing loss affect my baby?

In babies and young children it can be difficult to tell that they have a unilateral hearing loss. The majority of children with a unilateral hearing loss are able to hear normal speech in a quiet environment. Although they hear well in most environments, there are a few situations where they may find it difficult to hear.

Children with unilateral hearing loss may have difficulty:

- Hearing sounds directed towards their ear with the hearing loss.
- Telling which direction a sound is coming from. We use both our ears to help us know where sounds are coming from, this can be difficult for children with a unilateral hearing loss.
- Understanding speech when there is a lot of background noise.

- Understanding quiet voices or soft sounds.

As they get older, it is important to teach children with a unilateral hearing loss to take extra care when crossing the road, as they may not be aware of which direction traffic is coming from if they cannot see any vehicles moving.

Will a hearing aid be useful for my baby?

Some babies with a unilateral hearing loss use a hearing aid and some do not. Hearing aids can be helpful for some children. However, a hearing aid does not provide the same quality of hearing as the child's hearing ear. This can lead to confusion when trying to understand sounds or speech for some children.

Your audiologist will be able to tell you more about whether hearing aids will be useful for your baby.

What can I do to help my baby to hear more clearly?

As your child develops you may notice that they find it difficult to tell which direction a sound is coming from.

When you put your baby to sleep try to vary the side you lay your baby down on. If your baby is lying or breast-feeding on their hearing ear they will not be able to experience all of the sounds around them. When you talk or sing to your baby try to avoid having your baby's hearing ear pressed against your body.



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

- Move away from noises when you want your baby to listen to you.
- Try to position yourself so that your baby's hearing ear is closest to you when talking to them. Come even closer in a noisy room or environment.
- When talking or singing to your baby, make sure that their hearing ear is not resting on you.
- Try to make sure background noise is kept to a minimum. A room that has soft furnishings (like carpets and curtains) helps to cut down the effects of noise.

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.

What can I do to help my child when they go to nursery and later on to school?

Most children with a unilateral hearing loss manage well at nursery and school. It is important to let the nursery and school staff know about your child's hearing loss so they can ensure, where possible, your child has the best opportunity to fully participate in all that is taking place. If you let the teacher know about your child's hearing loss they can monitor progress in class more closely. If you are concerned about your child's schoolwork, talk with their teacher.