

Most babies with a unilateral hearing loss do not use a hearing aid. Your audiologist will talk to you about whether a hearing aid would help your baby.

What causes a hearing loss in one ear?

A permanent hearing loss may be inherited, even if no-one else in the family has a hearing loss. It may be caused by infections during pregnancy, premature birth and complications at birth. It may be part of another condition or linked to other difficulties. Hearing loss in one ear can also develop through childhood illnesses, such as mumps, measles or meningitis.

You can discuss how to find the cause of your baby's hearing loss with the specialist doctor who works with your audiologist. For some babies and children, it may not be possible to find the cause of their hearing loss.

What support is available?

Your audiologist and specialist doctor will support and advise you and your family.

When your baby can sit up and turn well to sounds, a hearing test should give more information about the hearing loss. It will be important to check that your baby's better hearing ear keeps working well.

Your baby will be seen regularly for hearing tests to check for any change in your baby's hearing levels. If you have any concern between appointments, ask your audiologist for an earlier test.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) can give you support and information, and it has a helpline for parents whose children have a hearing loss. Their experienced advisors can help answer any questions you may have.

You can contact the NDCS in the following ways:

E-mail: ndcs@ndcs.org.uk

Website: www.ndcs.org.uk


Interpreter Now: <https://interpreternow.co.uk/ndcs>

Freephone helpline: 0808 800 8880 (v/t)

(other methods of contact also available, see

<https://www.ndcs.org.uk/our-services/services-for-families/helpline/>)


Your local contact numbers are:



Newborn Hearing Screening Wales
Sgrinio Clyw Babanod Cymru

Your Baby has a Hearing Loss in One Ear

Information for parents



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Clarity approved by
Plain English Campaign

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Your Baby has a Hearing Loss in One Ear

This leaflet is for the parents of a baby who has a hearing loss in one ear.

It explains:

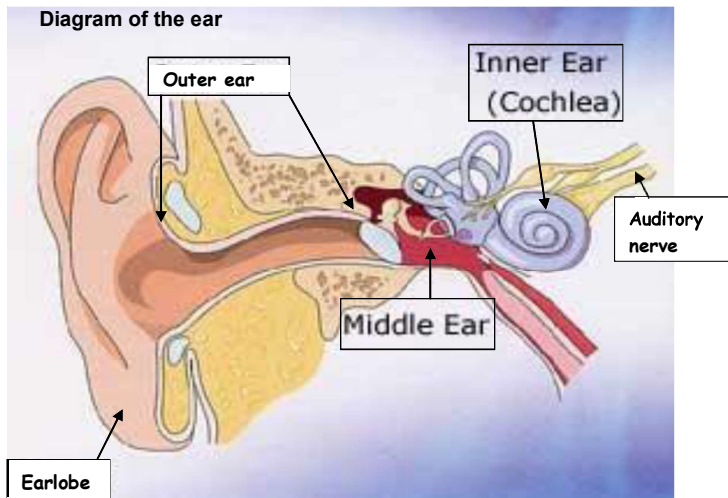
- How the ear works
- What a hearing loss in one ear means
- How it may affect your baby
- How it may be helped
- How it may affect your child as they grow
- What causes a hearing loss
- What support is available

How does the ear work?

Sound passes into the ear and is changed into signals that the brain can understand. The ear also helps us to balance.

The ear has 3 parts – the outer ear, middle ear and inner ear.

Diagram of the ear



What does a hearing loss in one ear mean?

This means that hearing tests have shown that your baby hears well with one ear but not as well with the other ear. This may also be called a unilateral hearing loss.

There are different levels of hearing loss. These can be described as mild, moderate, severe and profound. Your audiologist will explain what the test results show and what level of hearing loss your baby has. There are different types of hearing loss. The type of hearing loss your baby has depends on where the problem is in the ear.

Sensorineural hearing loss (sometimes called nerve deafness) is a permanent hearing loss. This usually means that there is a problem in the part of the inner ear called the cochlea.

Conductive hearing loss means that sound cannot easily pass through the outer and middle ear to the inner ear. Conductive hearing loss is usually temporary, but in a very small number of babies the hearing loss may be permanent.

Children with sensorineural hearing loss can also have a temporary conductive hearing loss.

How will this hearing loss affect my baby?

It can be difficult to tell that a baby or young child has a hearing loss in one ear. It is likely that your baby will hear well in most situations. Most children with a hearing loss in one ear will develop clear speech.

They may have difficulty

- hearing sounds or speech on the side with the hearing loss
- telling which direction a sound is coming from
- understanding speech when there is background noise

As your child grows up, there may be some situations which make it more difficult for your child to hear clearly. Your audiology team will advise you and give you more information.

What can help my baby hear more clearly?

Your baby will be close to you during the early months so will be able to hear your voice and see your face. However, here are some tips to help your baby hear more clearly:

- Make sure you have your baby's attention and eye contact before speaking
- Move closer to your baby when you are speaking, rather than raising your voice
- Try to make sure your baby's better hearing ear is closest to you when you are talking
- When talking or singing to your baby, make sure their better hearing ear is not resting on you
- Try to keep background noise as low as possible at home and move closer to your baby in noisy places