

# Recognising Hearing Loss



Deaf Children  
Australia



# Recognising Hearing Loss

## Signs of a hearing loss in a baby/toddler

- The baby starts to babble normally, then stops for no reason
- The baby does not respond to environmental sounds/ appears inattentive
- The baby does not begin to talk at an age when they should (approx. 5-6 months first words)
- Speech and language development seems delayed; they do not use many words

## Signs of a hearing loss in a child

- Appear inattentive and do not respond when called
- Have difficulty hearing if there is background noise
- Cannot locate the source of a sound
- Pronounce words incorrectly
- Need to have sentences or instructions repeated
- Misunderstand what is said
- Speak too loudly or too softly
- Turn up the TV or radio
- Look at your lips to lip read
- Have trouble hearing at a distance
- Cannot tell the difference between one sound from another
- Fall behind in school
- Tend to become withdrawn and quiet in group situations

## How old does a child have to be before they can have a hearing test?

All families have the option to have their babies hearing screened through the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Programs around Australia. Sometimes a hearing loss may arise later. If families suspect their baby or child has a hearing loss, they should act straight away to have their child's hearing tested. It is important not to delay testing a child's hearing level because if a child does have a hearing loss, it may delay the child's speech language development.

For information on how hearing is tested view our information sheet on [measuring hearing](#).

## **Where can hearing be tested?**

Hearing can also be tested by a private audiologist or at a hospital audiology clinic. Ask your doctor for a referral.

## **What happens when hearing loss is identified?**

When a hearing loss is identified in a child, the audiologist will give the family a folder of information, and refer them to Australian Hearing. Some states have Support Staff associated with the Newborn Hearing Screening Program, who can assist with making appointments with Australian Hearing and other support Agencies. In the states where these staff are not available, the audiology clinic may assist in making these appointments, or once the family have attended Australian Hearing, they may assist.

Most deaf children have their hearing needs managed by Australian Hearing. Australian Hearing is funded by the Commonwealth Government and has hearing centres all over Australia. Visit their website at [www.hearing.com.au](http://www.hearing.com.au) to find out more. It is a service provider for ongoing hearing tests and hearing aids for all children up to the age of 26 years. It requires the family to pay an annual subscription fee which covers supply and upgrade, service, repairs, insurance and batteries.

The early intervention organisation will tell families about the different communication choices available to them and their child, such as using either/both signing and speech. This will enable the family to choose the most appropriate communication method for their child. Complete and unbiased information on all types of communication should be provided by the early intervention organisation. If this does not happen, families can approach organisations such as Deaf Children Australia's (DCA) Helpline (details at the end of the article) and ask for assistance in locating the required information.

If the child is of school age, Australian Hearing will send a copy of the audiogram to the school in which your child is enrolled. The school and family should then discuss the most appropriate forms of support and assistance for the child and ensure these are put in place. Again, if you are having trouble locating information on how to ensure your child is fully supported in school, contact the DCA Helpline and appropriate information and support can be provided.

After learning your child is deaf or hard of hearing, you may have many questions. Deaf Children Australia (DCA) can help through our free services – Parent to Parent Program and National Helpline.

You can view our website for information on our Parent to Parent program or contact our helpline on 1800 645 916 or via email: [helpline@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:helpline@deafchildren.org.au).



## Should I stop trying to talk to my baby if I think they have a hearing loss?

It is extremely important that you continue to talk to your baby even if you think they cannot completely understand you. The more you can engage, talk and play with your baby, the better chance your baby has of developing good speech, language and communication skills. Even if you think your baby may have a hearing loss, keep talking to them. If your baby does have a hearing loss, early intervention organisations will be able to assist you in choosing and developing good strategies in communicating effectively with them as they grow up.

In the meantime, here are some things you can do help with communicating with your baby effectively:

- Move closer to your baby when you talk i.e. do not call out/talk to them from another room).
- Talk very clearly and put emphasis on the important words in your sentence
- Make sure your baby is watching you and can see your face when you talk
- Use more natural hand gestures than you normally would, e.g. 'would you like a drink?' could include gesturing as if you are having a drink.

Is it usual for families to be in shock when they are told their child has a hearing loss?

Many families experience a range of emotions when they are told their child has a hearing loss. These feelings may range from shock and denial, to a sense of relief that they have finally found out what was causing them concern. Sometimes families feel they won't be able to cope but it is important to remember that these feelings are normal and it takes time for families to work through these feelings. Deaf Children Australia encourages families to seek as much support as they feel they need.

## Websites

Identifying hearing loss:

**<http://www.eep.org.au>**

This is a fantastic website from the "Early Education Program for Hearing Impaired Children" for families who suspect their child has a hearing loss but are unsure what to do next, or for families who have recently had a child diagnosed as deaf/hard of hearing. It also has other families' stories on how they dealt with finding out their child had a hearing loss.

Hearing Problems in Children:

**[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)**

Direct link to the relevant article:

**[http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Hearing\\_problems\\_in\\_children?open](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Hearing_problems_in_children?open)**

This site discusses hearing problems in children and signs that your baby may have a hearing loss.

Deaf Children Australia's National Helpline Contact Details

Free Call from landlines: 1800 645 916 Or 03 9539 5300

TTY: 03 9510 7143

[helpline@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:helpline@deafchildren.org.au)

Measuring Hearing Information sheet

**<https://deafchildreinaustralia.org.au/information-sheets-measuring-hearing/>**

**For further information about Deaf Children Australia.**

**[www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au](http://www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au)**

Helpline 1800 645 916

[helpline@deafchildren.org.au](mailto:helpline@deafchildren.org.au)

Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf' to refer to all degrees and types of hearing loss.

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