



DEAF
CHILDREN
AND
ADULTS

**WHAT
FAMILY AND
FRIENDS OF
A NEWLY
DIAGNOSED
CHILD NEED
TO KNOW
ABOUT
DEAFNESS**

**BLUE
PRINT**

Deaf
Children
Australia.

Has someone in your network just found out their child is deaf? Here are some things you need to know, including what causes deafness and ways you can help.

If a baby or child in your extended family or friend network has just been diagnosed with deafness, it's only natural to have some questions. Along with wondering 'why?', you might also like to know how you can help. Whether you're a grandparent, auntie, uncle, cousin, friend or caregiver, here are some important things to know.

What causes hearing loss?

Understandably, the first thing many people wonder is 'why did this happen?' Hearing loss can be divided into two types. Congenital hearing loss is present from birth or shortly after birth. Causes of this type of hearing loss include genetics, an infection during pregnancy, or complications that occur at birth.

The other type of hearing loss is called acquired hearing loss. This is caused by something that happens after birth. Examples include chronic ear infections, injury to the ear or head, some medicines, fluid or wax build up, or foreign bodies in the ear.

Importantly, health professionals can't always find a cause for hearing loss. You may never know why the child is deaf or hard of hearing. Knowing the cause doesn't change how deafness is managed. It's also less important than making sure the child receives the love, nurture and support they need.

Kids with hearing loss grow into thriving adults

While things might seem a little overwhelming now, you will adjust to having a deaf child in your circle. Many families have walked this journey before. It's important to remember that deaf children typically grow to become adults who can study, work, and participate in family and community life. Some become Olympians, mountain climbers, teachers, researchers, artists and more.

People make different choices about communication

When a family discovers their child is deaf, they need to make some decisions about how they'll communicate. For example, some decide they want their child to learn spoken English. Others choose to communicate using sign language (Auslan), and still others use a blend of both. This is a very personal decision, and a lot of thought goes into it. You can help by doing your best to learn about and support that choice.

Management of deafness starts early

Newborns are screened for hearing loss shortly after birth. While a diagnosis of deafness can sometimes take longer, some babies will start wearing hearing aids and taking part in early intervention very young. Starting early helps babies develop important social, communication and cognitive skills. In fact, the earlier they can begin, the better the outcomes tend to be.



Read more about families who are raising a DHH child.



Lots of support is available for deaf kids and their families

A team of professionals is often involved in providing support for DHH infants and children and their families. Different professionals have knowledge and skills across different areas, all of which can help a child reach their potential. This is known as a multidisciplinary care approach.

In addition to the child's paediatrician and audiologist, this team might include an:

occupational therapist

speech-language pathologist

early education provider

NDIS support co-ordinator

These professionals work together with the child's family to support healthy growth and the development of essential life skills.

Advanced technology is available to deaf children

Things have come a long way since the days of bulky, cumbersome hearing aids! Today's sleek and advanced technology can help deaf kids listen and build communication skills. Hearing aids are the best option for some deaf children. Others will benefit from cochlear implants.

Various other assistive listening devices can help kids listen better at home, school and in some community settings.

What you can do to help

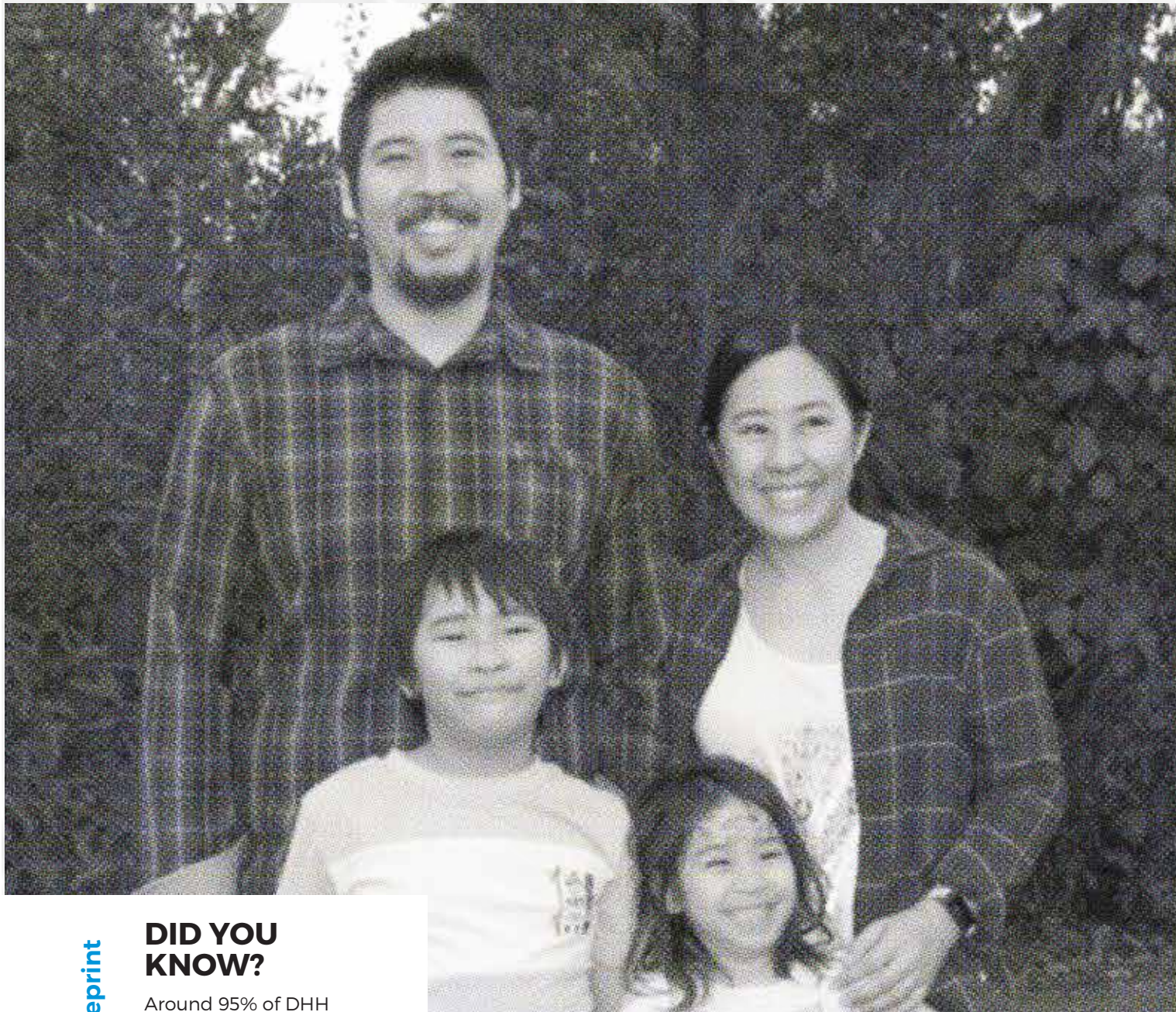
- Right now, you might feel a bit lost and uncertain about what you can do to support the people you care about. Here are some ideas.
- Just listen – having someone you can trust to discuss your feelings and concerns with can make a big difference.
- Respect their decisions – regardless of how you feel about them.

- Offer empathy and encouragement – this is usually more appreciated than advice.
- Be patient – this is a hard time for everyone.
- Provide practical help – most families are glad to receive practical help. You could prepare a meal, clean the house, mow the lawn, or pick up other children from school.
- Learn more about hearing loss in children – so you can understand more about the things that need to happen, such as hearing tests and communication choices.
- Learn some simple signs – if the family chooses to use Auslan, you could join in on the lessons.
- Avoid blaming anyone – hearing loss is not anyone's 'fault'.
- Accept the child for who they are – and remember deafness is just one aspect of this precious, multifaceted little one.

300

Did you know?

About 300 babies are born with a hearing impairment in Australia each year.



deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/blueprint

DID YOU KNOW?

Around 95% of DHH children are born into hearing families, who often feel isolated and confused. We help them navigate their new world.

Blueprint isn't just for sports clubs. If you offer activities or programs for children or young people, we'd love to have you on our side!

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