

Fact Sheet

Deaf In One Ear: The School Child



Children who are deaf in one ear should be assessed by an audiologist and an Ear Nose and Throat Specialist to check if anything can be done to correct the deafness.

Some parents, teachers and doctors think that a child who is deaf in one ear will not have any problems at home or at school because the other ear is normal. This may be wrong.

Research which followed up children with one deaf ear found that some of them had problems with:

- Learning to read.
- Spelling and writing stories.
- Doing maths.

It was found that unless extra help was available from parents, teachers and others, some of them had to repeat classes at school.

Children with deafness in one ear who do not get extra help can feel they are not as clever as their friends are. This should not occur if these children are given some extra help at home and at school.

Parents should take comfort from the fact that not all of these children have problems and following the steps described below can prevent or lessen any problems.

A cochlear implant (bionic ear) is never called for when only one ear is deaf.

What will I notice at home?

- Children who are deaf in one ear often seem to ignore you if there is background noise going on such as the TV or a noisy game. However, when you are in a quiet area they seem to hear quite well.
- They always like to sit on the same side of you when you are reading a story.

- They find it hard to hear you talk when you are driving and they cannot see your face.
- If these children get a cold and have temporary congestion in the "good" ear, they can miss much of what is said to them.
- The child who is deaf in one ear will often have trouble in picking the direction from which sounds are coming. Because they will hear everything better in the good ear, all sounds will seem to be coming from that side. That is another reason why children can seem very inconsistent in their response to voices and other sounds.

What might the teacher notice at school?

- Children who are deaf in one ear often seem to ignore the teacher when there is background noise.
- These children often seem unable to concentrate and may copy what another child is doing (rather than say they did not hear).
- Important instructions can be missed, especially if homework is given out when the class are packing away their things and there is noise in the room.
- Children who are deaf in one ear may have trouble hearing soft sounds in the classroom such as 's', 'f' and 'th'. Hence they may have trouble breaking words up into sounds (phonics) for reading and spelling.
- Sometimes these children have trouble in maths if they miss an important step in a maths process.
- In a noisy playground children who are deaf in one ear may look "lost".
- They find it hard to understand and talk to other children because of the noise.



What can I do if I think my child is deaf in one ear?

If you have not already done so, ask your family doctor to refer your child to an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist (E.N.T.) for a proper medical check on both ears.

Hearing can only be tested properly with special equipment in a sound-proof room. This may be available at:

- Australian Hearing branches - phone the Help Line on 13 17 97.
- Some Community Health Centres.
- Some Ear Nose and Throat Specialists' rooms.
- Some Audiology Units at hospitals or special centres.

My child is deaf in one ear - How can I help?

- Visit your child's classroom and teacher at school frequently to check on his/her progress.
- Remind the teachers about your child's hearing at the beginning of each year, or if a new teacher comes.
- Ask that your child be seated with his/her hearing ear close to the teacher.
- Check homework at home in a quiet area so you find out quickly if there are problems.
- Discuss with Australian Hearing whether there is special equipment (eg. Sound Field FM or personal FM unit) which could help him/her if

there are problems with background noise.

- Attend a regular check at Australian Hearing (or another Audiology Unit) so that you find out quickly if there is any change in the hearing ear.
- It is important to get treatment quickly for ear infections that will make your child's hearing worse.
- The hearing in your child's "good ear" is very precious. If an operation is advised for that ear, make sure that you understand why it is really necessary. Also ask for expert paediatric E.N.T. specialist care.

Remember

- See your doctor quickly for ear infections that will make your child's hearing worse. If he or she is hearing badly there may be congestion or infection in the "good ear."
- Visit your child's classroom and teacher at school frequently to check on your child's progress.

This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

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