



Suspected Hearing Loss in Babies and Children

Signs of hearing loss in babies

- In your baby's personal child health record (known as their 'Red Book' in England) you'll find a checklist of things to look out for in terms of hearing and listening development. The 'checklist for reaction to sounds' covers your baby shortly after birth until they are 12 months old. This helps you to look out for signs that your baby can hear, such as being startled by loud noises, recognising and responding to familiar sounds (such as Mum's voice) and turning in the direction of a sound.
- As your baby grows you should also make sure they are starting to make sounds, too. Your Red Book also includes a checklist for making sounds so you can see if your baby's communication is developing as expected. If not, this may be indicative of a hearing problem in your child.

Signs of hearing loss in children

- Hearing loss can happen at any time during childhood. It is common for children to get a temporary condition known as glue ear following colds or ear infections when fluid builds up in the ear and prevents the eardrum moving as freely as it should. For further information see the iHV factsheet 'My child has Glue Ear'. Permanent hearing loss may follow childhood infection (such as meningitis) or a head injury but can happen without any known cause.
- When your child is around 2 years of age they will usually have a general health review during which their hearing and speech development will be assessed. Any problems should be picked up at this stage, but if you think your child has a hearing problem you should speak to your Health Visitor or GP as soon as possible. Children will also usually have a routine hearing test when they start school.

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For additional fact sheets see www.ihv.org.uk

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- Signs to look out for in older children that might point to hearing loss include not responding when you call your child, or having the TV on louder than others in the family.
- You might also notice that your child's speech or language development appears to be slower than you'd expect. They may not be clear when they speak, and may speak very loudly.
- If your child is at school you may notice that they become frustrated or tired at the end of the day.

Ear infections in children

- Signs of ear infection in babies and toddlers may include redness, tugging or pulling at the ears, raised temperature, being unwell and/or poor feeding.
- Ear infections tend to occur after a common cold or sinus infection.
- Other signs are a change in mood, sleeping difficulties, difficulty swallowing or appearing in pain when swallowing or chewing.
- Yellow or white fluid may come from the ear and there may be an unpleasant smell.
- Some bacterium that cause ear infections also affect the gastrointestinal tract so it may be that a child has diarrhoea and vomiting.
- If your child has earache but is otherwise well, you can give them paracetamol or ibuprofen for 12-24 hours.
- If the earache continues, your child is unwell, or their ears are discharging (leaking fluid), speak to your GP who may prescribe antibiotics in some circumstances.
- Don't put any oil, eardrops or cotton buds into your child's ear unless your GP advises you to do so.

What to do if you suspect hearing loss

- Speak to your Health Visitor or GP; they can refer you to an audiology clinic to get your child's hearing tested.
- To help your child understand why they're getting a hearing test, take a look at the National Deaf Children's Society's (NDCS) 'Going to the Hearing Clinic' comic for children.

Hearing tests and audiograms

- The hearing tests used will depend on your child's age and stage of development.
- Often several tests will be carried out to find out the level of hearing and how different parts of the ear are working. The audiologist will look at the different test results to build up an accurate picture of your child's hearing.
- Some of your child's test results will be written on a chart, known as an audiogram. It shows you how loud a sound has to be, and at what frequency, before your child can hear it.

Understanding deafness

- There are different levels of deafness. These can be described as a decibel (dB) hearing level (how loud a sound has to be for your child to hear it) or described using terms such as 'mild', 'moderate', 'severe' or 'profound'.

More information

For more information about hearing tests and deafness, see NDCS's guide:
bit.ly/1soWxf2

You can also find useful information about hearing loss at:
bit.ly/1lequd5