

Hearing Loss In Children

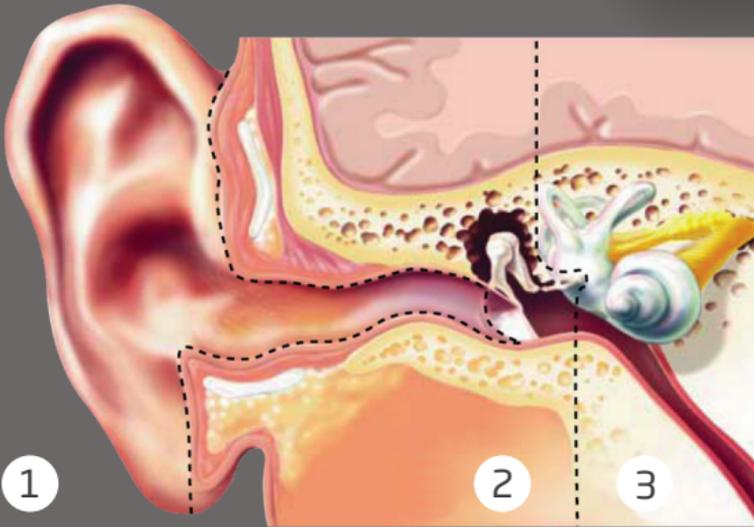


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How do we hear?

Sound is vibration. Sound travels via the ear canal to the brain where it is perceived and interpreted.



The ear consists of:

- 1) The outer ear
- 2) The middle ear
- 3) The inner ear

The outer ear:

The Pinna, Ear canal and Eardrum

The pinna captures sound and transmits it to the middle and inner ear. The ear canal is lined with hair and ear wax. This is normal and aids in the hygiene and protection of the ear. Sound waves set the eardrum into vibration, which in turn stimulates the bones in the middle ear.

The middle ear

The middle ear consists of three bones

- 1) The malleus (hammer)
- 2) The incus (anvil)
- 3) The stapes (stirrup)

These bones are connected to each other and vibrate consecutively in order for sound to be transmitted to the inner ear.

The inner ear

The cochlea is situated in the inner ear. It is lined with hair cells that perceive the vibration. The vibration is transmitted via the hearing nerve to the brain where we hear it as sound.

FACT: Children may fall behind in school as a result of a hearing loss. Children who receive amplification can sometimes perform just as well as their peers.

Every hearing loss is unique

Some hearing losses are very severe and the child can hear very little, whereas other losses may be mild. As a result hearing loss in children may manifest in different ways.

Some signs of hearing loss to look out for:

- The child does not pay attention to sound
- The child does not respond when called
- You need to repeat yourself before the child understands
- You need to raise your voice when talking
- The child may use signs and gestures rather than speech
- If the child is speaking, he/she may not produce all sounds correctly
- The child may be experiencing difficulties at school

Early hearing testing

A baby's hearing can be tested from the very first week of life. Most hospitals have the facilities to test babies' hearing before they are discharged. Speak to the sister in the ward or contact your audiologist at your nearest hospital or clinic. The earlier the hearing loss is detected, the easier it is to treat. It is recommended that a child's hearing is tested annually.



What can be done for my child?

The most important thing is to get your child's hearing tested to find out if there is a hearing loss and if so, the degree of hearing loss. A hearing care professional will be able to give you information about the hearing loss.

The child may need:

- Medical treatment such as medication for an ear infection
- Hearing amplification (such as hearing aids)
- An important part of helping a child with hearing loss, is to support their language development - this may be through spoken language or sign language. The audiologist can help prepare your child and refer you to an appropriate school.

Can my child go to a mainstream school?

Each child is different and will need individual support. The choice of school will depend on many things:

The degree of hearing loss, if the child has any other learning difficulties, how early the hearing loss was identified and whether the child has been taught to listen with hearing aids. It also depends on what decision the parents have made about how the child will learn. A team of professional people will help you with this decision.

Where can I find help?

The best place to start would be your local hearing care professional. Hearing care professionals are employed in both the private and public sectors in South Africa, and are trained in the management of hearing loss.

A full hearing evaluation will be done and they will be able to advise you on the best course of action.

We hear with our brain. Not our ears.

The ears receive sounds and send them to the brain that translates the sounds into meaning. Oticon hearing aids feature BrainHearing™ technology, designed to support your brain and help it make sense of sound. Our technology helps you hear better, with less effort.



Social activities stimulate your brain

If you have a hearing loss, you will find it easier to participate in social activities if you use hearing aids. Social interaction stimulates your brain, which decreases the risk of accelerated mental decline.



How good is your hearing?

Ask yourself these 6 questions. If you answer YES to most of them, it might be a sign of hearing loss, but you need a professional hearing test to confirm it.

1. In your experience, do people around you mumble, or speak softly?
2. Do you find it difficult to follow conversations in restaurants or crowded places?
3. Do you often have to turn up the volume on your TV, radio or phone?
4. Do friends and family members complain that they have to repeat what they are saying?
5. Do you have to look at people's faces to understand what they're saying?
6. Have you noticed that everyday sounds, like the twittering of birds, footsteps or the clock ticking, are gone?



Act now!

If you would like to have your hearing tested, please contact your local hearing care professional.



For more information
call 0800 684 266
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