



How to Detect Hearing Loss in Children

Though we don't often think about it, hearing problems are not just problems for older people. Children can and do have issues with their hearing that affect their daily lives. Fortunately, with modern medical techniques and equipment, it's easier than ever to detect and treat hearing loss in children.

What Causes Hearing Loss in Children?

Many of the causes of hearing loss for children are the same as those in the adult population. However, it can be harder to detect a young child's hearing loss because they may not be aware that anything is wrong. Some of the most common causes of hearing loss in children include:

- Untreated or severe ear infections
- Fluid buildup in the inner ear, known as otitis media
- Measles or mumps infections
- Injuries to the head or ear
- Side-effects from certain medications
- Damage to the ear due to exposure to loud noises
- Rare congenital or genetic conditions

In total, experts estimate that about 0.1 to 0.5 percent of children in the United States suffer from hearing loss. While this is a low proportion, it still means millions of children are potentially suffering from hearing problems. Since these problems could lead to developmental hurdles later on, it's always best to get your child tested if you think he or she may be at risk for hearing loss.

What are the Signs?

Detecting hearing loss in young children isn't as easy as detecting it in adults, since children rarely complain that they can't hear something well. Instead of waiting for them to say something, you'll need to be proactive and look for other signs of hearing loss.

Obviously, not all of these symptoms indicate a hearing problem on their own. Indeed, many of these symptoms are easy to confuse with other conditions like Attention Deficit Disorder, dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome, and even problems with teachers, classmates, or friends. However, if you begin to notice multiple symptoms or see them more frequently, you may want to get your child a hearing test to rule out the problem.

Some of the most common signs of hearing loss in children include:

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- Unclear or unusual speech patterns or pronunciations, especially compared to peers and friends.
- Difficulty following simple directions or remembering what they were told.
- Frequently turning the volume up on the television, computer, or their headphones.
- Failure to respond to their own name or other calls.
- Finding yourself frequently repeating requests or commands.
- Answering questions with illogical or unclear responses.
- A drop in school grades, or reports from teachers indicating a lack of attention or difficulty concentrating.
- Relying on visual cues such as hand motions, facial expressions, or other actions to understand requests or to respond to situations.
- Occasional or frequent complaints about pressure, pain, or other sensations in the ear. In young children, rubbing or scratching at the ear can also indicate a problem.

How Do You Treat It?

Because child hearing loss has many different potential causes, there is no single treatment to correct it. You and your child's audiologist will have to talk about the options available to make a treatment decision. However, some treatments are still more common than others.

For hearing loss due to an ear infection or otitis media, medication such as an antibiotic is sometimes all that you need to clear up the problem. Otitis media is one of the most common causes of hearing loss in young children, but most cases can be cleared up with antibiotics.

Children that experience more frequent or severe ear infections, or some other ear-related problems, may need other treatments. One such treatment is ear tubes. These tubes are surgically implanted into your child's inner ear to allow fluid to drain out and prevent further infection and other problems.

Hearing aids are an option for children with more profound hearing loss that can't be treated by other means. An audiologist can help find a hearing aid for your child that will allow them to partially regain much of their lost hearing, helping them to develop normally and interact with the world better.

Cochlear implants are another hearing solution, though they are only useful in a small percentage of cases. A cochlear implant is an electronic device that is implanted directly into the patient's head, and which works by sending electronic stimulation to the nerves inside the cochlea. Cochlear implants are only useful in instances of profound or severe hearing loss or deafness - generally they're a "last resort" after other treatments fail to help.

Pediatric hearing loss can be devastating to both a child and his or her parents, but it doesn't have to go untreated. If you suspect your child of suffering from hearing loss, contact us today at the Oklahoma Hearing Center. With six location in Central and Southern Oklahoma, we can help you and your family with any hearing-related issues. Contact us today or visit our Facebook page for more information.

