



Unilateral Hearing Loss: Tips for Parents

Infants with unilateral hearing loss are being identified within the first few months of life subsequent to the newborn hearing screening test before hospital discharge. Approximately 2 babies in every 1000 births have a unilateral hearing loss. There are many strategies parents can use to enhance their child's listening skills. There are also specific changes than can be made to the home environment to make listening easier for your child.

Why does a unilateral hearing loss make it more difficult for my child to hear?

- Hearing in noise: The important sound, often the speech of the caregiver, is harder to hear and not as clear.
- Finding or localizing a sound: For most children, it is difficult to find a sound when you don't hear the same way in each ear
- Language development: Children say what they hear. If a child doesn't hear speech clearly, it may be more difficult for the child to develop clear speech.
- Attending to auditory information: Soft voices and deep voices may be more difficult for a child to understand.

What strategies can I use at home to make listening easier for my child?

- Move away from noises when you want your child to listen to you.
- Position your baby so that the normally hearing ear is directed toward the sound you want the child to hear.
- When you want your child to hear you, notice if there are other sounds around you. Try to make the environment quieter so that your child will hear you better.
- When you are talking to your baby, minimize the distance between you. Come even closer in a noisy environment.

How can I speak to my baby to make my words clearer?

- Make your speech a little louder by getting closer to your baby.
- Provide visual clues when you speak or make a sound by letting your baby see your lips. Be sure there is good lighting, and add gestures.
- Get your child's attention and *then* start to talk.
- Provide occasional pauses in what you say to allow more time for your baby to understand the message.
- Place more emphasis on key words in a phrase.

Parents can carefully observe their child and note any warning signs that hearing loss is affecting development. Consider these tips:

1. If your child has an ear infection, go to your doctor right away. An ear infection may make it harder to hear in the good ear.
 2. Have your child's hearing tested on a regular basis as recommended by your audiologist.
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1. Have an assessment of speech, communication, language and functional hearing every 6 months to check your child's development in these areas.
 2. Obtain help from an early interventionist who can teach your family specific techniques to help your baby hear.
 3. Learn some strategies to develop good listening skills in your child (called auditory training)

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Hands & Voices is a non-profit, parent-driven organization dedicated to supporting families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

For more information: <http://www.handsandvoices.org/>