

Approximately 2 babies in every 1000 births have a unilateral hearing loss. A newborn hearing-screening test can identify a unilateral hearing loss within the first few months of life. The test may even be given before your newborn child leaves the hospital.

There are many strategies you can use to enhance your child's listening skills. In addition, there are specific changes that can be made to the home environment to make listening easier for your child.

How does a unilateral hearing loss affect my child's ability to hear and respond to sound?

A unilateral hearing loss affects your child in several ways:

- **Hearing in background noise:** Important sounds, such as the speech of your child's caregiver, are not as clear and are harder for your child to hear when there is other noise in the background.
- **Finding or localizing a sound:** Most children find it difficult to tell where a sound is coming from when they do not have the same hearing in both ears.

- **Language development:** Children learn to speak by saying what they hear. If your child does not hear speech clearly, it may be more difficult for your child to develop clear speech.
- **Hearing soft sounds:** Soft voices and voices that are far away may be more difficult for your child to understand.

What can I do to make listening easier for my child?

These tips will make it easier for your child to listen to you:

- Reduce or remove sources of background noise such as televisions and dishwashers.
- Move away from sources of noise that you can't reduce.
- Position your child so that the ear with normal hearing is directed toward the sound you want the child to hear.
- When you are talking to your child, get close. Get even closer when you are in a noisy environment.

What are some communication strategies that I can use to ensure that my child hears me?

Here are some ways to help your child hear and understand you more easily:

- Speak clearly to your child on the side where his/her hearing is normal.
- Avoid shouting as it will actually add distortion to your speech, making it even harder to understand what you are saying.
- Rephrase rather than repeat sentences that are not understood.
- Use visual cues (facial expressions, gestures).
- Speak clearly (not too loud or too soft; not too fast or too slow).
- Use appropriate facial expressions and body language.
- Have visual aids on hand (pictures, books, toys).
- Get your child's visual attention before speaking.
- Be sure there is good lighting when you are speaking to your child.

Will a hearing aid or amplification help my child?

- A hearing aid may be helpful depending on the nature of your child's hearing loss. Your audiologist will be able to tell you if a hearing aid will help your child.
- For school-aged children, there are a few assistive listening devices that may be helpful. For example, sound-field or personal amplification systems can help a child to hear better in the classroom. In these systems, the teacher wears a microphone which transmits either to a headset worn by your child, or to speakers in the classroom. In both cases, the teacher's voice is amplified so that it is more easily heard above the background noise of the classroom. Speak to your audiologist or teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing to find out if your child might benefit from an FM system.

What can I do to ensure ongoing hearing care for my child?

Here are some sources of health care support for your child's hearing loss:

1. Visit an otolaryngologist (ENT) if middle ear fluid or infections are present.
2. Have your child's hearing tested on a regular basis, as recommended by your audiologist.

3. Arrange classroom observation and consultation with a speech and language pathologist or hearing resource teacher in your child's school district.
4. Ask your early interventionist for some strategies that help your child to develop good listening skills. This is called auditory training.

As your child's parent, you are part of a team. Your partners are your health care provider, your audiologist, and your early interventionist who is familiar with hearing loss and auditory skill development. Your team can check to see if the unilateral hearing loss has an impact on speech and language learning.

Contact information:

Audiology Department

Room K2-192

Hours: 8:30 to 4:30

(604) 875-2112

website: <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/Services/ClinicalDiagnosticFamilyServices/Audiology/default.htm>

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Your Child has a Unilateral Hearing Loss



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