



Management of children

WHO HAVE A PERMANENT, UNAIDED HEARING LOSS

SOME CHILDREN WHO HAVE A PERMANENT OR LONG TERM HEARING LOSS WILL NOT REQUIRE OR BENEFIT FROM PERSONAL AMPLIFICATION. IF YOUR CHILD DOES NOT WEAR A HEARING AID THERE ARE OTHER THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP MANAGE THEIR HEARING NEEDS.

Communication Strategies

All children can benefit from good communication strategies. For example:

1. Gain your child's attention before speaking

Try to make sure that they are focused on listening before speaking to them.

2. Face your child when speaking

Ensure your child can see your face clearly. Speak normally. Don't speak to your child from another room or at a distance. Keep your hands away from your face when speaking. Seeing your face will give your child extra clues if any speech sounds are missed. Encourage your child to look at you while you are speaking.

3. Limit excessive distracting noise where possible.

For example, turn the TV off or down or move to another room so it is not competing with your voice when you are speaking to your child.

4. Create a language rich environment at home.

Everyday family activities are a rich learning environment for the development of language. Provide your child with many opportunities to learn through family conversations and play. Make reading a regular and enjoyable part of your family's day and have fun with music and singing.

5. Ensure your child's teacher is aware of the hearing loss and its implications in the classroom

This will allow the teacher to adopt appropriate strategies in the classroom to assist your child.

Refer to the Australian Hearing information sheet *The Hearing Impaired Child in the Classroom* for useful classroom strategies.

Soundfield amplification

A soundfield system is used in the classroom to ensure the teacher's voice is equally loud in all parts of the classroom. The teacher wears a microphone that transmits their voice to an amplifier and loud speaker system. This helps to overcome the listening difficulties caused by distance from the teacher, background noise or soft voices.

Soundfield systems are purchased by schools or individuals and some funding support options may be available in your area. Your audiologist will be able to provide you with more information.

Further information can be found in the information sheet *Soundfield Amplification*.

Monitoring your child's hearing

Watch for signs of conductive hearing loss

Most children experience some periods of temporary hearing loss related to cold, flu and ear infections while they are growing up. If a child already has a mild or unilateral hearing loss, this temporary dip may have quite a big impact on their hearing and speech and language development. You can reduce the impact by early follow up of signs of conductive hearing loss.

The information sheet ***Otitis Media*** has some useful information about detecting and dealing with conductive hearing loss.

If you think your child may have *Otitis Media*, contact your family doctor.

Permanent changes in hearing

Some children's hearing may get worse over time. Your audiologist will have discussed with you when your child should return for reassessment. Until that time you can watch for warning signs that your child's hearing may have changed.

How can I tell if my child's hearing has changed?

Watch for signs of hearing difficulties such as:

- * Not aware someone who is "out-of-sight" is speaking;
- * Not responding when name is called and/or giving a startled or surprised look when they realise their name has been called;
- * Asking for repetitions or saying "what?" frequently;
- * Intently watching speaker's face;
- * Increasing the volume of the TV or sitting very close to TV when set at normal volume; and
- * Increasing difficulties or behaviour problems in the classroom.

If you think your child's responses to sound have changed, follow this up with your audiologist.

Avoid unnecessary noise exposure

As your child grows ensure that they are not exposed to very loud noise unnecessarily. Encourage your child to use hearing protection when necessary – eg: mowing the lawn or working with loud machinery. Try to avoid excessive use of personal stereos on high volume settings.

For further information please refer to the information sheet *Preventing Hearing Loss*, which can be found at www.hearing.com.au

Monitor your child's speech and language development

Learning to communicate is a step-by-step process. While children develop individually, there is a general pattern to speech development.

Age:	Sounds produced clearly:
3 years	p, b, m, w, t, d, n, k, g, h, y
4½ years	s, z, sh, ch, l, j, f
8½ years	v, th, r, blends (e.g. tr, pl)

It is normal for children to make mistakes when they begin to talk. This may involve substituting sounds, leaving sounds out or mixing up the order of sounds in words. In early years, some speech may still be unclear as not all speech sounds have been fully mastered. At any age, speech may become less clear if they are tired, unwell or excited.

If you are concerned about your child's speech and language development, seek advice from a speech pathologist.

Further information about children's speech and language development can be found at www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au. This website can also help you to locate a speech pathologist in your area.



Everyday family activities are a rich learning environment for the development of language. Provide your child with many opportunities to learn through family conversations and play.

School Performance

Your child's hearing loss may begin to cause difficulties as schooling becomes more challenging.

Make sure that your child's teacher is aware of the hearing loss. Encourage them to let you know if they think the hearing loss is affecting your child's performance in class.

Respond to the changing needs of your child

Children's needs and attitudes towards their hearing loss can change over time. Technology is changing rapidly and providing options that were not available in the past. As a result you may wish to review your decision about personal amplification at some stage in the future. This is not a problem. Contact your audiologist, who will be able to provide you with the latest advice and help you to plan for the next stage of your child's development.

If you or your child's teacher is concerned that the hearing loss is affecting your child at school, contact your audiologist.