



Will my children have a hearing loss?

Many young adults with a hearing impairment become concerned about their children inheriting a hearing loss. As you grow up you may wonder what caused your hearing loss and what are the chances of having a child with hearing problems when you start a family.

Perhaps your parents have already told you why you have a hearing problem. Most parents want to know what caused the loss and would have gone to a doctor to find out. Sometimes the cause of the hearing loss is quite clear; from a serious illness such as meningitis or from an illness during pregnancy such as German measles. Sometimes there is a history of hearing impairment in the family.

However, it's not uncommon for the cause of the hearing loss to be unknown.

Genetic deafness

If no other cause can be found for your hearing loss, then it is possible that the cause is genetic. This means that you have a greater chance than most people of having a child with a hearing loss.

Medical knowledge is improving all the time and there may now be tests that will tell you the cause of your hearing impairment. Apart from new tests, recent research has uncovered a new gene for recessive hearing loss – that is, a hereditary loss where there is little family history of hearing problems.

So it is well worth seeing a genetic counsellor to see if you can find out why you have a hearing problem and what the chances are of having a child with a hearing loss too.

What is genetic counselling?

Genetic counselling is provided by a team of health professionals who work together to provide an individual or family with current information and supportive counselling (advice or guidance) regarding problems in growth, development and health that may have a genetic basis. This can assist families and individuals to understand and adjust to the diagnosis of a genetic condition.

What happens in genetic counselling?

The consultation

During the consultation, a family health history is taken to provide information about the health of family members. A diagnosis of a genetic condition may be made or confirmed in a pregnancy, after birth, in childhood or later in life. The diagnosis may be made on the basis of clinical features, biochemical tests or genetic tests.

Where there is a genetic condition in a family, the genetic counsellor can estimate the risks that other family members, or future children, will be affected. Often, however, a person is reassured following genetic counselling to find out that a condition is unlikely to recur in their family. When a condition is diagnosed in a family, the impact and possible effects on the individual and their family can be discussed in a supportive atmosphere.

Management strategies can be developed and referral provided to appropriate community resources, including support groups. Both verbal and written information about the condition and its impact is provided to assist people in dealing with some of the issues that may arise from the diagnosis of a genetic condition.

Follow up

After the initial consultation an opportunity is provided to go over the information and for on-going support as families and individuals learn about the condition. It is very common for people to think of many questions after the genetic counselling session, and new questions also arise as the condition develops. Follow-up is provided in further consultations, if geographically possible, or by telephone.

Who provides genetic counselling?

The health professional team providing genetic counselling may consist of clinical geneticists, genetic counsellors and social workers.

Clinical Geneticists are medical practitioners with a specialist qualification in clinical genetics.

Genetic Counsellors are graduate health professionals with specialist training, certified by the Human Genetics Society of Australasia (HGSA) to provide genetic counselling.

Social Workers with a special interest in genetics and particular genetic conditions, work closely with clinical geneticists, genetic counsellors and support groups.

Genetic Counselling Services in each State

It is preferable to have a referral to Genetic Counselling through your GP although some services will allow you to self refer. Speak with your audiologist who will be able to guide you.

The address list from the following website may be helpful:

Metropolitan New South Wales

CAMPERDOWN	Royal Prince Alfred Hospital	Molecular and Clinical Genetics Unit Missenden Road, Camperdown NSW 2050 Ph: (02) 9515 5080 Fax: (02) 9515 7595
KOGARAH	St George Hospital	Women's and Children's Health , Kogarah, NSW 2217 Tel: (02) 9350 3635 Fax: (02) 9350 3901
LIVERPOOL	Liverpool Health Services	Clinical Genetics Unit, Locked Bag 7103, Liverpool , BC 1871 Ph: (02) 9828 4665 Fax: (02) 9828 4650
NEWCASTLE	Newcastle Western Suburbs Hospital	Regional Medical Genetics Unit, PO Box 84, Waratah, NSW 2298 Ph: (02) 4985 3100 Fax: (02) 4985 3105

PENRITH	Nepean Hospital	Clinical Genetics Department, Penrith, NSW 2750 Tel: (02) 4734 3362 Fax: (02) 4734 2567
RANDWICK	The Sydney Children's Hospital	Department of Medical Genetics, Randwick, NSW 2031 Ph: (02) 9382 1704 Fax: (02) 9382 1711
ST LEONARDS	Royal North Shore Hospital	St Leonards, NSW 2065 Ph: (02) 9926 6478 Fax: (02) 9926 7880
WESTMEAD	The Children's Hospital	Clinical Genetics Unit, Westmead, NSW Ph: (02) 9845 3273 Fax: (02) 9845 3204

Regional Centres in New South Wales

BATHURST		158 William Street, BATHURST NSW 2795 Tel: (02) 6331 5533 Fax: (02) 6332 2039
BROKEN HILL	Community Health Centre	BROKEN HILL NSW 2880 Tel: (02) 8080 1554 Fax: (02) 8080 1611
COFFS HARBOUR	Community Health Centre	Locked Mail Bag 812, Cnr High & Boambee StsNSW 2450 Tel: (02) 6656 7000 Fax: (02) 6656 7687
FORSTER	Forster Community Health Centre	Breeze Pde, FORSTER NSW 2428 Tel: (02) 6555 6822 Fax: (02) 6554 8874

GOSFORD	Child and Family Health Gateway Centre	PO Box 361 GOSFORD 2250 Tel: (02) 4328 7994 Fax: (02) 4328 7925
GOULBURN	Child Development Unit	Locked Bag 15 Cnr Goldsmith and Faithful Streets GOULBURN NSW 2580 Tel: (02) 4827 3951 Fax: (02) 4827 3958
KEMPSEY	Port Macquarie Community Health Centre	Tel: (02) 6588 2882 Fax: (02) 6588 2800
MUDGEE	Macquarie Area Health Service	PO Box 29, MUDGEE NSW 2805 Tel: (02) 6378 6236 Fax: (02) 6372 7341
MUSWELLBROOK	Community Health Centre	Brentwood Street, PO Box 120 MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333 Tel: (02) 6542 2050 Fax: (02) 6542 2005

NORTH COAST	Lismore Base Hospital	PO Box 419,LISMORE ,NSW 2480 Tel: (02) 66250 111 Fax: (02) 66250 102
PORT MACQUARIE	Hastings Community Health Centre	Morton Street, PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444 Tel: (02) 6588 2882 Fax: (02) 6588 2800
TAMWORTH	Community Health Centre	180 Peel Street, TAMWORTH NSW 2340 Tel: (02) 6766 2555 Fax: (02) 6766 3967
TAREE	Community Health Centre	22 York Street, TAREE NSW 2480 Tel: (02) 6592 9703 Fax: (02) 6592 9607
WAGGA WAGGA	Wagga Base Hospital	Cnr Edward and Docker Sts PO Box 159, WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2650 Tel: (02) 6938 6666

		Fax: (02) 6921 5632
WOLLONGONG	Wollongong Hospital	Illawarra Genetic Counselling Service, Private Mail Bag 8808, South Coast Mail Centre, NSW 2521 Ph: (02) 4253 4267 Fax: (02) 4253 4257

Other States and Territories in Australia		
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY	The Canberra Hospital	Mail: PO Box 11, WODEN ACT 2606 Tel: (06) 6244 4042 Fax: (02) 6282 2844
NORTHERN TERRITORY	Women's and Children's Hospital	Mail: South Australian Clinical Genetics, Department of Medical GeneticsNORTH ADELAIDE SA 5006 Tel: (08) 8161 7375 or (08) 8161 7010 Fax: (08) 8204 6088

QUEENSLAND	Royal Children's Hospital	<p>Mail: Herston Road, HERSTON , QLD 4029</p> <p>Ph: (07) 3636 1686</p> <p>Fax: (07) 3636 1987</p>
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	Women's and Children's Hospital	<p>South Australian Clinical Genetics, NORTH ADELAIDE, SA 5006, Department of Medical Genetics</p> <p>Ph: (08) 8161 7375 or (08) 8161 7010</p> <p>Fax: (08) 8161 6088</p>
TASMANIA	Royal Hobart Hospital	<p>Genetics Services (Tas), HOBART, TAS 7000</p> <p>Tel: (03) 6222 8296</p> <p>Fax: (03) 6222 7961</p> <p>Mobile: 0408 127 363 or 0438 213 145</p>
VICTORIA	Royal Children's Hospital	<p>Victorian Clinical Genetics Service PARKVILLE VIC 3052</p> <p>Ph: (03) 8341 6201</p> <p>Fax: (03) 8341 6390</p>

**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

King Edward Memorial
Hospital

Genetic Services of Western Australia, 374 Bagot Road, SUBIACO
WA 6008

Ph: (08) 9340 1525

Fax: (08) 9340 1678

