



Unilateral Hearing Loss

Provides information for caring for, and communicating with, a child with a one-sided hearing loss.

What is unilateral hearing loss?

Unilateral, or one-sided, hearing loss is a decrease in auditory sensitivity in one ear due to damage, disease or malformation of the outer, middle, and/or inner ear. Unilateral hearing loss occurs in approximately 1 in 500 children. These children may have problems in one or more of the following areas:

- Difficulty locating the source of sounds
- Difficulty understanding speech in a noisy area
- Difficulty maintaining attention and following directions or discussions in a noisy area
- Difficulty with schoolwork, particularly language-based subjects such as reading, writing and spelling

What can I do to help my child?

The following guidelines and considerations will help you and your child to minimize potential problems.

Hearing Health Care

- Your child should have a hearing test each year.
- Be sure to get quick treatment for ear infections, because middle ear problems can decrease the hearing level in the “good ear.”
- Progressive hearing loss is a possibility. Your child should be seen for evaluation if increased hearing loss is suspected.
- Always protect your child’s ears with earplugs or earmuffs during activities with high levels of noise, such as loud music, firearms, snowmobiling, fireworks and lawn mowing.
- Always protect your child during activities when head trauma may be possible; for example, have your child wear a helmet when bike riding.
- Teach your child how to cross busy streets, looking left, right and left again, and to use crosswalks. Your child may have difficulty localizing sounds. Bicycles with mirrors will help make biking a safer activity.

Communication Strategies

- Gain your child’s attention before starting a conversation or giving instructions.
- Favor your child’s “good ear.”
- Rephrase rather than repeat statements and instructions if your child misunderstands.
- Teachers and classroom aides should be aware of your child’s hearing loss.

To Learn More

- Otolaryngology
206-987-2105
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers
206-987-2280 (TTY)

- Have your child sit close to the teacher, with the "good ear" directed toward the classroom.
- Monitoring of classroom performance and academic achievement is essential.
- **S-P-E-E-C-H** may help you to remember steps for easier communication:
 - S** - State the topic to be discussed before starting a conversation.
 - P** - Pace your conversation at a moderate rate and normal loudness, with occasional pauses to allow for understanding.
 - E** - Enunciate clearly, without exaggerated lip movements.
 - E** - Enthusiastically communicate, using natural body language and gestures.
 - CH**- Check with your child to make sure she understands your message before changing topics.

Speech and Language Assessment

Your child's speech and language should be evaluated so that any problems with comprehension and expression can be detected early. Prompt intervention may minimize difficulties in academic achievement and performance.

Amplification Options

If your child has language delay or problems in classroom performance, amplification can be considered by:

- Use of an amplification system in the classroom, such as a wireless FM system
- Use of CROS hearing aids — sound is routed from the poorer ear to the better ear

Your audiologist can discuss these options with you and assist you in obtaining the best outcome for your child. If you have any questions or concerns, please call:

Doctor: _____

Nurse: _____

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

© 1996, 2003, 2006, 2010 Seattle Children's, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.
