

Your child has a severe hearing loss in one ear. This may come as a shock to you. You may not have noticed any particular problem, or it may be something which you have suspected for a long time. There are some important things to say about this situation:

- This is not a catastrophe
- This is a fairly common problem (we see about one such patient a month)
- There is no medical or surgical treatment possible at the present time.

Cause

The precise cause of most cases of severe one-sided hearing loss in children is not known. What is known is that mumps can do this and most cases are put down to this cause.

Fortunately the loss is almost invariably in one ear and we have never seen the other ear involved at a later stage in the same way. Even if the condition is recognised at the time of illness there is nothing that anyone can do about it.

Some cases are undoubtedly congenital (from birth).

Mechanism

It is the inner ear which is damaged. This is extremely complex and no surgery can restore function. A hearing aid will not help. In order for a hearing aid to be effective there must be a considerable degree of inner ear function remaining, and this is not usually the case.

Management

It is most important for teachers and anyone else who talks to your child, to know about the problem. Try to ensure that when your child changes classes the new teacher knows.

When reading to your child or listening to him/her read, sit so that the good ear is towards you.

Similarly when walking along the street or sitting in a bus, position yourself appropriately so that the good ear is towards you.

When your child is in a normal classroom situation, he/she should sit so that the good ear is towards the teacher at the front of the class.

Obviously, any infection or injury which involves the good ear has to be taken seriously.

Education

A one-sided hearing loss is not an educational handicap in itself. Normal education in a normal class in a normal school is the rule. The school Health Service will arrange for your child to have his/her good ear checked at regular intervals.

Career guidance

A few careers are barred, e.g. the armed forces, airline pilots.

“CROS spectacle-worn hearing aids” – these are combined spectacles and hearing aids which can be useful for example in a business person who has a one-sided hearing loss and who has to attend committee meetings. They have a microphone on one-sided and feed sound into the other ear. They are not appropriate for children.

If there are any further questions you would like to raise then please do not hesitate to do so. You can either write to us, or arrange an outpatient appointment.

ENT

Severe One-Sided Hearing Loss



An information leaflet for patients.

Date of publication: July 2010
Date for review: July 2012
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