

Minnesota Department of Health

Infant Hearing Loss

August 2004

Infant hearing loss

About 200, or one in every 350 babies, is born deaf or and hard of hearing in Minnesota each year. Most babies who are born with a hearing loss have parents who have normal hearing and have had no experience with hearing loss.

Identifying hearing loss early is important. About 33 percent of children with a hearing loss have a second disability. Parents who have an infant who is deaf or hard of hearing may need help to find resources and connect their family to services.

Detecting hearing loss in infants

Hearing loss in babies may be found through infant hearing tests done in the hospital shortly after birth. If a baby does not pass the hearing test, another test should be done. If the baby does not pass the second time, the baby should see a hearing specialist, called an Audiologist, who can help determine if the baby really has a hearing loss, the type of loss, how much of a loss, and what the family and infant might need.

Causes of infant hearing loss

There are many things that cause hearing loss in a baby. Doctors may suggest special tests and evaluations to help figure out why a newborn is deaf or hard of hearing.

- Hearing loss can be inherited (passed through a family). About 50 percent of the infants with a hearing loss inherited it from their families. Hearing loss can be genetic even if there are no other family members who were born deaf or hard of hearing.
- Hearing loss can be caused by certain infections, medications, or problems with birth and delivery.
- In some cases, the cause of the hearing loss may not be known.

Problems for infants and children

- A child with a hearing loss may miss important learning experiences.
- A child who is deaf or hard of hearing may have difficulty with speech and language.
- A child may have social, educational, or emotional problems if help for the hearing loss is delayed.

Special needs

Fortunately, there is help for infants and children with hearing loss. Every child is special. By working together, parents, doctors, and special educators find the best solutions for infants with special needs and their families. When hearing loss is treated early, children who are deaf or hard of hearing can usually do as well as children with normal hearing.

- Hearing aids may increase the sounds a baby is able to hear.
- Audiologists may fit infants for hearing aids
- In Minnesota, Early Childhood Intervention services may begin at birth.
- Early communication is important.
- Families will need information and help to make important decisions like how to best talk and play with their deaf/hard of hearing babies.

Early intervention and education

For children with hearing loss, early intervention and education are important to development and should begin by six months of age:

- Parents, doctors, specialists, and teachers should work together.
- Social and educational resources are available for infants with hearing loss and their families. Call **1-800-728-5420** or **(651) 215-8956** or go to www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mcshn/cdte.htm to learn more.

More information

Lifetrack Resources – www.familysupportconnection.org
1-866-346-4543

Minnesota Department of Health, Newborn Hearing Screening Program – (612) 676-5260
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/unhs/index.html
Minnesota Department of Human Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services – www.dhhsd.org/
1-800-456-7589

My Baby's Hearing – www.babyhearing.org/
PACER Center – www.pacer.org/ (952) 838-9000 or
1-800-537-2237



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