

Indiana's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program Considerations for Children with Unilateral Hearing Loss (Hearing Loss in One Ear)



Common Characteristics of Children with Unilateral Hearing Loss

- Difficulty locating the source of sounds
- Trouble following instructions and maintaining attention (especially if the “good” ear is close to the competing noise)
- Trouble understanding speech in a background of noise (especially if the “good” ear is close to the competing noise)
- Difficulty with language-based schoolwork (Reading, Spelling, etc.)

Recommended Follow-up

- Routine audiologic evaluations to monitor hearing over time
- Prompt medical management of middle ear disorders with pediatrician or ENT doctor
- Speech and language assessments to monitor development (at ~12-18 months of age)
- Use of noise protection when in highly noisy situations

Other Evaluations that might be recommended

- Vision evaluation
- Genetic Consult
- Early Intervention assessment

Communication Strategies

The speaker should:

- Engage the child's attention before providing instructions
- Rephrase statements and instructions rather than just repeating them
- Provide visual supplements to hearing to prevent confusion
- Favor the child's “good” ear
- Anticipate problems if speaking at a distance or in a noisy environment
- Continue to expand vocabulary and sentence structure as often as possible so the child develops a rich language structure

Classroom Management

- Provide good lighting to maximize use of visual input
- Maintain a structured environment with the least amount of noise and echo as possible
- Provide seating so that the child can favor his “good” ear (no more than 5-6 ft. away from the teacher and away from the hallway, street, or playground noise)
- Use a variety of visual aids to optimize learning (i.e., list key vocabulary on blackboard)
- Check comprehension before changing topics

Educational Assessment

- Schedule a comprehensive speech/language evaluation upon identification of the hearing loss
- Monitor classroom performance/academic achievement. Should problems exist, refer child for psycho-educational evaluation

Amplification Options

- Use of an amplification system in the classroom, such as an FM system
- Use of a personal hearing aid on the poor hearing ear if it is determined to provide benefit
- Use of a free-field amplification system in a noisy classroom (not always successful)
- Use of a CROS hearing aid (clinical investigations have NOT been positive with children)

Special Considerations

- As child may have difficulty locating and hearing sounds from behind and on side of poorer hearing, consider providing a mirror on bicycle to allow child to see cars from behind
- It is important the child be encouraged to actively look all directions before crossing streets
- It is important to teach the child to self-advocate if the listening situation gets too difficult