

Frequently Asked Questions about Hearing Loss

Will My Child's Hearing Loss Get Better or Worse?

This is difficult to determine. If your child has a conductive loss, it may get better. If your child has a sensorineural hearing loss, it is unlikely to get better. Some hearing losses can get worse over time. These are called **Progressive Hearing Losses**. To ensure that your child is properly fit with amplification, you should follow up with your audiologist on a regular basis. Your Otolaryngologist (ENT)/Audiologist/Pediatrician may be able to give you more information about the chances of your child's hearing loss getting worse over time.

Does My Child Need Hearing Aids?

Hearing loss greatly decreases the amount of sound your child's ears and brain receives. If your child is not able to hear speech, then she/he will have difficulty learning spoken language.

- An infant can be fit with hearing aids at any age.
- If the communication method (See Language and Communication) you choose requires your child to wear hearing aids, it is important to get the hearing aids as soon as possible to maximize access to spoken language.
- Some parents may choose a communication method that uses only sign language and does not require the use of hearing aids. However, the majority of parents who choose signing also choose their child to use hearing aids or cochlear implants.

Will My Child be Able to Talk?

This is a difficult question to answer. Many factors can influence a child's ability to use spoken language to communicate. It will depend on the type and degree of your child's hearing loss, the consistency of amplification, age of diagnosis, and many other factors. If learning to understand and use spoken language is important for your family, it is essential that your child has consistent amplification that allows him/her to access (be able to hear) spoken language. In addition to amplification, you should seek early intervention services from a qualified professional that has experience working with children who are deaf/hard of hearing so that you can learn the language strategies you need to incorporate to help your child. The best way to know if using spoken language is an effective communication choice is to work with your early intervention professional to assess your child's spoken language skills and compare them to other children his/her age.

Does My Child Need to Learn Sign Language?

This is also a difficult question to answer. Many factors can influence a family's decision to use sign language. Many families use sign language in a variety of ways. Some families use sign language to encourage their child to communicate until their child can gain access to spoken language through their hearing aids or cochlear implants. Some families use sign language to communicate in their everyday life. Sign language can be a way to help your child continue to learn language despite the challenges with their amplification. There are many avenues for your family to learn sign language including videos, in person, classes, and online. If you choose to learn sign language, it will not interfere with your child's ability to also learn a spoken language. It is important that you explore all of the communication tools available to you and see what works best for your child and your family.