



Empowering Children. Supporting Families. Building Brighter Futures.

Resource 032 | Hearing conditions

Sensorineural hearing loss

What it means

Sensorineural hearing loss involves the inner ear's sensory structures and/or the auditory nerve. It may be present at birth or develop later, and can affect one or both ears. Communication needs vary with hearing access, family preferences, and associated health conditions. [1]

Causes and risk factors

Possible causes include genetic conditions, congenital infections such as CMV, some birth or neonatal complications, certain medicines, and later infection or injury. Sometimes the cause remains unknown. Not all cases progress, but some do, so ongoing hearing review may be needed. [1,2]

General family education. A concern deserves assessment, but this guide does not diagnose a child or prescribe treatment.



Signs and everyday impact

A child may not respond consistently to sound, miss softer or higher-pitched speech, or have speech and language concerns. Difficulty may be more noticeable in noise. Mild or one-sided loss can be easy to miss. Behavior alone cannot reliably measure the amount of hearing available. [1,2]

Assessment and diagnosis

Pediatric audiology uses suitable behavioral tests, auditory brainstem response, otoacoustic emissions, and other measures as indicated. A medical evaluation may investigate cause and associated conditions. The child's communication and language access should be assessed in parallel, with attention to all relevant languages. [1,2]

Treatment and therapy

Support may include hearing aids, assistive technology, and cochlear implantation for some eligible children after specialist assessment. These options do not provide identical outcomes for every child. Accessible language, including signed and/or spoken approaches chosen with informed family support, is central. Early intervention, educator support, and device follow-up help participation. [1,2,3]

Support at home

Use the child's effective language and communication methods consistently. Check prescribed devices as instructed and make communication visible and accessible. Ask about support in noise and group settings. Families should receive balanced information and should not have to wait for a device to begin language-rich interaction.

When to seek help

Sudden or rapidly worsening hearing, new neurological symptoms, or hearing change after significant illness or injury needs prompt medical evaluation.

Questions for your care team

- Is the hearing loss stable or likely to change?
- What technology and language options suit this child?
- How will hearing and communication progress be monitored?



Podcast preparation

Use this outline to develop a later podcast script.

Suggested opening

Welcome to Mariel Early Intervention. Today we discuss sensorineural hearing loss. Sensorineural hearing loss involves the inner ear's sensory structures and/or the auditory nerve. This is general education; each child needs individualized care.

Opening: Define the topic and its developmental context.

Understanding: Explain causes and signs without inviting self-diagnosis.

Assessment: Describe evaluation and distinguish screening from diagnosis.

Support: Discuss treatment, therapy, and practical family supports.

Closing: Explain urgent signs and one clear next step.

Misconception to address: Hearing technology alone does not replace accessible language and communication support.

Before recording: update clinical references and local service details, arrange clinical review, and use fully consented or fictional examples.

Terms in plain language

- Sensorineural: involving the inner ear or auditory nerve.
- Auditory brainstem response: measurement of neural responses to sound.
- Accessible language: language the child can reliably perceive and use.

Sources and further reading

Sources accessed 3 October 2026. Numbered references support the clinical overview. Treatment availability and referral routes vary by country.

[1] Types of Hearing Loss

<https://cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/about/types-of-hearing-loss.html>

[2] Hearing Loss in Children

<https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/hearing-loss-in-children/>

[3] Language and Communication of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

<https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/language-communication-deaf-hard-of-hearing-children/>