



Empowering Children. Supporting Families. Building Brighter Futures.

Resource 033 | Hearing conditions

Mixed hearing loss

What it means

Mixed hearing loss combines conductive and sensorineural components. A child has both a sound-transmission difficulty in the outer or middle ear and reduced function in the inner ear or auditory pathway. Treating one component may help, but does not necessarily resolve the other. [1]

Causes and risk factors

A child with inner-ear hearing loss may also develop middle-ear fluid or another conductive condition. Some structural, genetic, infectious, or injury-related conditions affect more than one part of the hearing system. The combination and persistence of causes vary. [1,2]

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



Signs and everyday impact

Responses to speech may be inconsistent or reduced, and communication may be more difficult in noise. Hearing can fluctuate when a middle-ear component changes. Speech or language concerns may appear, but signs do not show how much of the hearing loss comes from each component. [1,2]

Assessment and diagnosis

A pediatric audiologist compares suitable hearing measures and evaluates middle-ear function to identify both components. Ear, nose, and throat assessment investigates medical or structural causes. Reassessment after treating a conductive problem helps establish remaining hearing levels and appropriate technology settings. [1,2]

Treatment and therapy

Medical or surgical treatment may address the conductive component. Hearing aids, other assistive technology, or cochlear implant assessment may be appropriate for the persistent component according to the full hearing profile. Accessible language and early developmental support remain important while investigations and treatment continue. [1,2,3]

Support at home

Follow the hearing and device review schedule, especially after ear illness or treatment. Use clear, accessible communication and reduce competing noise. Report changes in response to sound or comfort. Do not assume hearing has returned to normal because an ear infection has improved.

When to seek help

Sudden hearing deterioration, ear or head injury, significant pain, or associated neurological symptoms requires prompt clinical assessment.

Questions for your care team

- What portion of the hearing difficulty is conductive and what portion is sensorineural?
- When should hearing be retested after medical treatment?
- What language access and technology support are needed now?



Podcast preparation

Use this outline to develop a later podcast script.

Suggested opening

Welcome to Mariel Early Intervention. Today we discuss mixed hearing loss. Mixed hearing loss combines conductive and sensorineural components. 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: Clearing middle-ear fluid does not automatically remove an underlying sensorineural hearing loss.

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

Terms in plain language

- Mixed: including more than one hearing mechanism.
- Audiogram: a chart summarizing hearing levels.
- Fluctuating: changing over time.

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] Ear Infections in Children, Babies & Toddlers

<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/ear-infections-children>