

Mild hearing loss – information pack

You have been given this leaflet because a hearing test has shown that your child has a mild hearing loss. This leaflet will tell you about what mild hearing loss means and what help is available.

What is mild hearing loss?

Children with a mild hearing loss have hearing that is slightly below the level that is considered normal. They may have difficulty hearing quieter sounds.

Around 0.4 per 1000 children are born with a permanent mild hearing loss in both ears. Mild hearing loss can be present from birth. It may have been inherited or may be caused by problems during the pregnancy or birth. A mild hearing loss may also occur later in childhood as a result of an infection, for example, mumps or meningitis, or because of a head injury. In many cases, the actual cause of the mild hearing loss may not be identified. It is important to monitor hearing levels in children with mild hearing loss over time, as although uncommon, there are occasions when a more significant hearing loss can develop.

Facts about mild hearing loss

- A mild hearing loss can affect speech and language development, educational attainment and social interaction. Although children with a mild hearing loss may appear to respond appropriately to sounds, their listening experience on which learning is based will not be complete.
- With a mild hearing loss, a child may experience difficulties with:
 - Hearing quiet sounds and subtle speech differences
 - Following fast-paced discussions
 - Hearing words clearly out of context
 - Speech and language difficulties
 - Difficulties at school including slower progress and behavioural problems
 - Hearing speech when there is background noise
 - More difficulty interacting with others
 - Road safety
- In situations where there is background noise, for example at school, a child with mild hearing loss may be more easily distracted. In order to participate fully in the tasks,

he/she will have to maintain good levels of concentration that may increase their tiredness.

- When speech is not heard clearly this can affect a child's own speech production causing a reduction in speech intelligibility. Language development may also be delayed.
- A child with a hearing loss relies more on visual information than a child with normal hearing. It is important that your child's eyesight is checked regularly.

What help is available?

Fitting a hearing aid

The introduction of hearing aids helps to stimulate the hearing pathway so that it can be used to its maximum potential as soon as possible.

A hearing aid is a special type of small amplifier. Its job is to make the sounds we hear louder. The signal will not be perfect as the hearing aid does not make the hearing become normal, but amplifies sounds so that your child can hear them.

Using a hearing aid can give the wearer a lot of useful information about speech and environmental sound.

Types of hearing aid

There are many different models of hearing aid available in various shapes, sizes, colours and ways in which they process the sound. Your audiology team will discuss with you the most appropriate options to suit individual needs and preferences.

Most hearing aids fit behind the ear. All behind the ear hearing aids basically consist of a microphone and an amplifier and are powered by a small battery. Special earmoulds are manufactured to carry the sound into the ear canal.

Radio aid systems

Children with mild hearing loss may also benefit from a radio aid system attached to their hearing aids. The speaker wears a transmitter, and the radio signal is received in the child's hearing aids. This can give a better quality sound in situations where there is background noise, for example, when a hearing aid alone does not maximise a child's access to the most important speech sounds for example in the classroom, in restaurants, on car journeys and on bike rides as well as at after school clubs.

Earmoulds

Earmoulds are made from an impression of the ear taken by your audiologist. To do this they will usually place a small sponge in the ear and then insert a specially mixed plasticine-type material to fill the ear completely. Once this has hardened after 1-2 minutes, it can gently be removed.

Soundfield systems

Using a soundfield system may be an alternative solution to fitting a hearing aid depending on your child's hearing difficulty. This is generally used to help listening in the classroom situation as it ensures the child can hear the teacher's voice at a constant volume wherever he/she is sat and in whichever direction he/she is facing.

The system comprises of a microphone and speaker. The microphone is worn by the teacher and the sound is transmitted to a loud-speaker. This is most commonly a portable speaker that sits on the child's desk but may also be speakers that are fitted around the classroom. Since the microphone is close to the teacher's mouth the speech sounds it detects and transmits to the child's speaker are clear and have less background noise interference.

Soundfield systems are *not* provided by NHS or Education services but can be purchased. They only provide help with listening in the classroom.

Hints to help with a mild hearing loss

Communication

- Keep background noise to a minimum as much as possible.
- Get your child's attention before speaking to them.
- In background noise, speak to your child at close range.
- Re-phrase sentences rather than repeating them if they have not been understood.

At school

- Make the teacher aware that your child has a hearing loss.
- Ask for your child to be seated as near to the teacher as possible.

Road and personal safety

- Teach your child to look around them to be sure of where a sound is coming from.
- Before crossing the road it is particularly important that your child looks around to visually check for traffic.
- You may wish to install rear-view mirrors to your child's bicycle so that they can visually locate where traffic is behind them.

Protecting your child's hearing

- Your child should avoid listening to loud sounds for long periods of time, for example headphones, music concerts, and when older if out in pubs, bars or night-clubs. It is important that your child wears ear-protection when necessary.
- See your GP as soon as possible if your child has an ear-infection as this may cause his/her hearing to temporarily deteriorate. Furthermore if the infection is severe and left untreated it may permanently reduce the hearing levels.

Our commitment to you

- To provide you with an excellent service to meet your individual needs and those of your child.
- To give you and your child individual attention.
- To be available to you should you or your child need advice or reassurance.
- To provide support when you are coming to terms with a hearing loss.
- To offer help if a hearing loss causes problems when yours or your child's lifestyle changes.
- To ensure you and your child feel confident and happy using a hearing aid.
- To make every effort to offer you a suitable date and time for appointments.
- To make every effort to see you for an appointment on time.

Your commitment to us

- To make every effort to attend and be punctual at the appointments made for you.
- To inform us as soon as you know that you will be unable to attend an appointment.
- To help staff assigned to you or your child's care to help you by cooperating with them.

To respect and care for any devices loaned to your child as best you can, as they remain the property of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

For further information about the Trust, visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Department of Audiology

Telephone 0118 322 7238

Email: audiology.royalberkshire@nhs.net

Website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/audiology

If you would like this leaflet in other languages or formats (e.g. large print, Braille or audio), please contact the Audiology Department.

Reviewed: March 2020

Review due: March 2022