

Tips for Children with Unilateral Hearing Loss
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What is unilateral hearing loss (UHL)?

Your child has been diagnosed with a unilateral hearing loss. UHL means there is a normal hearing loss in one ear and a hearing loss in the other. It can range from mild to total hearing loss. Asymmetric hearing loss (AHL) means there is a slight to mild loss in one ear and a moderate up to a profound hearing loss in the other ear. Hearing loss affects everyone differently. Here is some information to help you understand more about UHL and AHL and tips on how you can help your child listen better.

What are some common side effects of UHL?

- Having trouble figuring out where a sound is coming from*
- Difficulty hearing the soft sounds of speech and language especially in noisy places*
- Some may be a little slow to meet some speech and language milestones on time*
- Not understanding what people are saying when you are in noisy places*
- Unable to pay attention for a long period of time, trouble keeping focused*
- Having a hard time following directions that have several parts in noisy situations*
- May become tired more easily (from listening with only one normal hearing ear)*
- May develop subtle speech, language, or learning difficulties*

How can I help develop my child's speech and language?

Here are some things you can do to help your child develop his speech and language skills

- Get the child's attention, make eye contact, and follow child's eyes*
- Position yourself near the good ear and speak clearly*
- Keep background noise down to a minimum*
- Talk about what is happening now, the activities that the child is engaged in, and daily routines*
- Talk about what you are doing (e.g. "I am washing the table, so we can eat lunch.")*
- Imitate and expand your child's statements by a word or a phrase to help increase vocabulary skills. Expand on your child's statement with additional information to build thinking skills.*
- When giving the child a direction, speak a little slower and pause between the parts of the direction (e.g. "Please pick up your toys...then get your coat.").*
- Ask the child to repeat what you have said to check that all of the direction was understood (e.g. "What do you need to do after you pick up your toys?").*
- To encourage vocabulary growth, talk about and describe objects and actions in different ways and provide a lot of experiences with books (e.g. child, "That's a pretty flower." Parent, "Yes that is a pretty flower. That flower is called a daisy.")*
- Observe your child's reactions to know if information is understood, especially in noisy environments. Ask questions to make sure your child understood*
- Help your child turn the good ear to the speaker or stand close to others so that peers can be heard during play.*

- *Have your child's speech and language development checked on a regular basis as recommended or if there are concerns.*

How can I develop my child's listening skills?

Here are some things you can do to help your child develop his listening skills:

- *Position yourself in front of your child's face – to teach use of visual cues.*
- *Have your child look at the person who is speaking to him, especially in noisy situations.*
- *In the car place your child in a position that makes the speaker's voice closest to the better hearing ear – if you are the passenger, sit in the back seat next to your child's good ear*
- *Have your child look at the person who is speaking to him.*
- *Limit the amount of background noise and visual distractions (e.g., turn off the TV, radio)*
- *Read books and talk on the side of the better hearing ear.*
- *Teach your child to find the best spots to listen and learn!*
- *Educate caregivers/teachers about the degree of hearing loss and what they can do to better help your child listen and learn. Request that his progress in school be carefully monitored throughout the school year.*

Here are some things you can do to help make a better listening environment for your child:

- *Become aware of the noises that are in your child's environment and limit the amount of background noise. Some common noise sources are: TVs, radios, open windows, fans, dishwashers, microwave, running water and a hair dryer.*
- *Evaluate the listening environment and make any changes that would most benefit your child. Some examples are:*
 - *restaurant – ask for a seat away from the kitchen door – place the child with the better hearing ear towards the primary speaker*
 - *auditorium or large room – have your child sit near the middle, at the front of the room (good visual position) and away from other sound sources*
 - *classroom – ask that tennis balls placed on feet of desks/chairs, add area rugs or curtains to absorb sound. Identify competing sound sources (air conditioner, fans, pencil sharpeners, computer terminals, etc) and make sure child is not seated near them.*
- *Openly talk about where you are placing your child so the child learns how to make these decisions for himself. (e.g. "Let's think about the best place to sit in this restaurant" or "That radio is too loud. Let's turn it off so we can talk. "). This will help your child learn to place himself to his listening advantage.*
- *Use earplugs to protect against loud sounds (fireworks, lawnmowers, music, etc).*

Check with the ENT doctor and/or audiologist

- *When you feel additional support is needed, like amplification (hearing aids) or FM devices.*
- *To have your child's hearing tested more frequently to watch for possible changes.*
- *Whenever your child has an ear infection.*