



## Mild Hearing Loss

Babies are now screened for hearing loss shortly after birth. For every child found to be deaf, there are 7-8 children with mild hearing loss.

### Mild hearing loss doesn't sound too bad. Should I be concerned?

One study asked parents to rate how much difficulty a child with mild hearing loss would have. Zero for no problems - 7 for extreme problems. After thinking about "mild hearing loss" the average rating was 2.7. After actually listening with a mild hearing loss the rating was 5.3. So parents like you thought that "mild hearing loss" meant that the child wouldn't have many problems. After listening with mild hearing loss they judged it to be "serious" and "handicapping." They also said that it would be important (1) for the child to wear hearing aid(s), and (2) to sit close to the teacher. Because mild hearing loss is worse than "mild" sounds, it has lifelong effects if not treated as early as possible.

### Experience mild hearing loss

Mild hearing loss can range from 20 dB to 40 dB. The following is a simulation of what it is like to hear at normal (0 dB) and at 20 dB.



10 Slight Loss.wav

The next recording is for hearing at normal (0 dB) and at a 30 dB hearing loss. As you will hear, the extra 10 dB of hearing loss makes a big difference in loudness.



11 Mild Loss.wav

Your child may have a mild loss only in the high pitches or he or she may have a mild hearing loss in all the pitches. These two mild hearing losses will sound different. Your child's audiologist can help you listen to what your child's amount of hearing loss sounds like. You can also listen with a mild hearing loss (30-35 dB) by buying foam ear plugs at a drug store. Wear them and talk quietly with someone with the television on in the background. Talk across a large room about something you didn't already know. You will find that listening with mild hearing loss takes more attention and more work. It is also easy to miss parts of words, especially when information is new.

### My child seems to hear so much, why should the hearing loss cause problems?

Your child can "hear" but it takes more effort to listen. That effort means that less energy exists to understand what was said. ANY background noise will make listening much harder. Children with mild hearing loss may also develop problems getting along easily with others. Sometimes problems happen because what a parent expects of a child they *know* can hear does not match the reality that the child still has hearing loss. He will have challenges understanding in all situations, except when it is very quiet. One study found that children with 25 dB hearing were delayed in language 1.2 years. Those with 27-40 dB hearing loss were 2 years delayed. "Passing" as normal hearing when you have a mild hearing loss doesn't work well because a child may miss 15 - 25% of the teacher's words. Teachers often believe these children aren't paying attention or choosing to not follow directions.

### What should I do?

Hearing aids in both ears is the first and most important step. This is your child's best chance for developing like children who have no hearing loss. Without hearing aids you can expect speech, language, behavior and/or social problems. Another reason to act early is that hearing loss can change. Your child has a mild hearing loss now, but it may get worse (or it may not), making it even more challenging for him or her to listen effectively. Wearing hearing aids is also a

reminder to the teacher that your child has imperfect hearing. If he seems inattentive, or is not as quick as others to follow a direction, she may be more understanding. Special listening equipment used at school called a personal FM system will help your child hear the teacher crystal clear and give him the best chance to stay with the class and be the best student he can be. Control background noise and be close to your child if you really want and expect him to hear what you say. Obtain early intervention services to help make sure your child's speech and language develop at the same rate as children with normal hearing. Finally, plan on working with your child's school to set up any special help that may be needed for him or her to be able to learn like children with normal hearing.

## Links/Resources

- The Fred Flintstone clip on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TD5E88fFnxE&feature=related> simulates what a mild hearing loss in just the high pitches would sound like.
- For a step-by-step decrease in sound at 10 decibels at a time, listening to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yjc8NDtAZ4&feature=related> will be helpful, whether your child's hearing loss is conductive or sensorineural.
- The benefit of meeting other parents of children with hearing loss: <http://www.familysupportconnection.org/html/HOHissues.htm>
- Poor quality of life for children with minor hearing loss <http://www.hear-it.org/page.dsp?page=3865>
- Hearing Loss in Children: Center for Disease Control Early Hearing Detection and Intervention <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/index.html>



mild hearing loss.doc

- Information about listening and learning challenges with mild hearing loss to share with teachers.



13 Facts.pdf

- Information about learning challenges with mild hearing loss.
- Haggard, R. S., & Primus, M. A. (1999). Parental Perceptions of Hearing Loss Classification in Children. *American Journal of Audiology*, 8(2), 83-92.