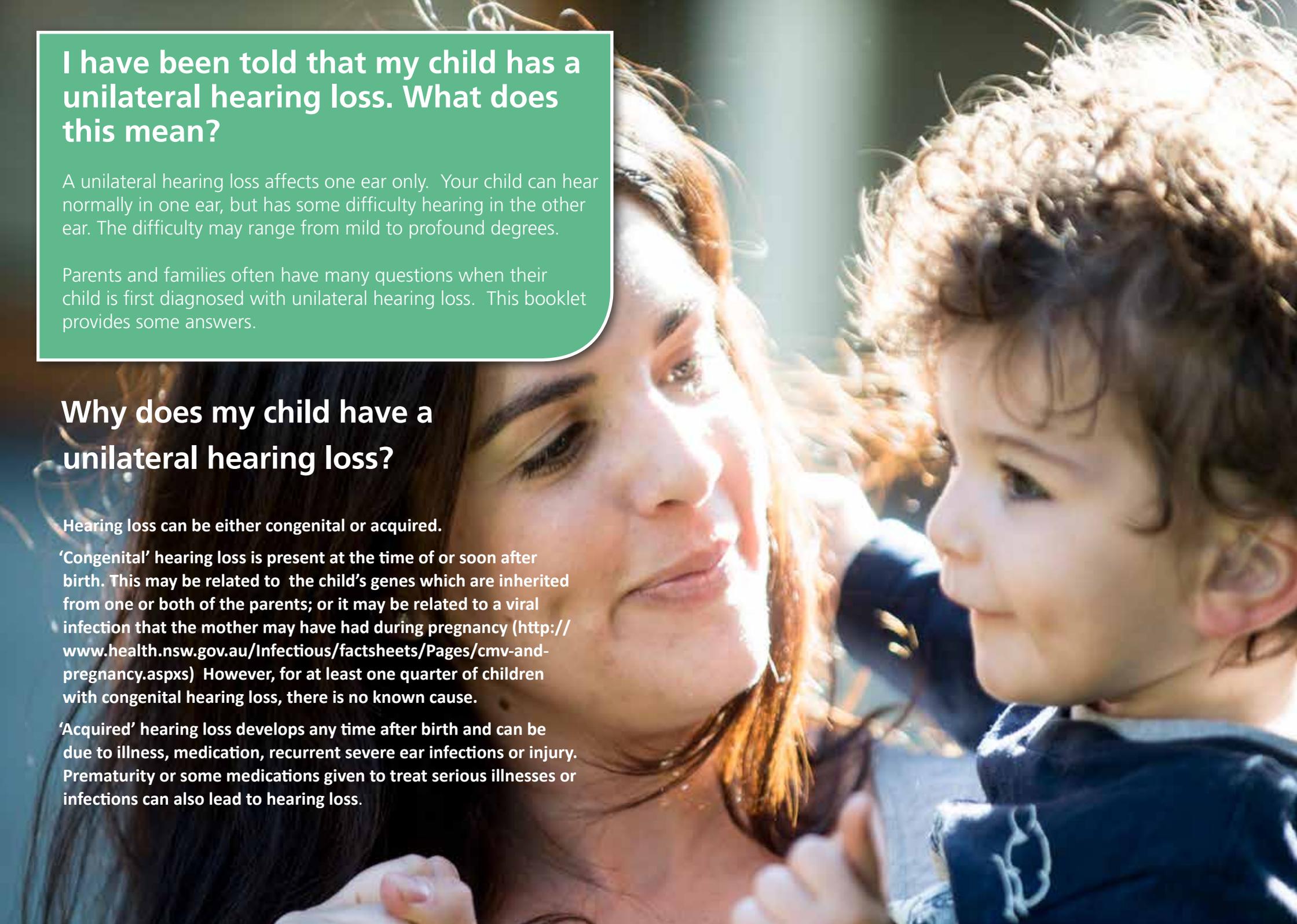




Hearing loss in one ear?

A parents guide to
unilateral hearing loss



I have been told that my child has a unilateral hearing loss. What does this mean?

A unilateral hearing loss affects one ear only. Your child can hear normally in one ear, but has some difficulty hearing in the other ear. The difficulty may range from mild to profound degrees.

Parents and families often have many questions when their child is first diagnosed with unilateral hearing loss. This booklet provides some answers.

Why does my child have a unilateral hearing loss?

Hearing loss can be either congenital or acquired.

‘Congenital’ hearing loss is present at the time of or soon after birth. This may be related to the child’s genes which are inherited from one or both of the parents; or it may be related to a viral infection that the mother may have had during pregnancy (<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/cmv-and-pregnancy.aspx>) However, for at least one quarter of children with congenital hearing loss, there is no known cause.

‘Acquired’ hearing loss develops any time after birth and can be due to illness, medication, recurrent severe ear infections or injury. Prematurity or some medications given to treat serious illnesses or infections can also lead to hearing loss.

The effects can be different for each individual.

Your child may have difficulty with some or all of the following:

- hearing sounds on the side of the 'bad' ear
- hearing when someone speaks at a distance
- understanding speech in noisy situations
- identifying where a sound comes from

A small proportion of children with unilateral hearing loss may need help to:

- develop age-appropriate speech and language ability
- develop age-appropriate communication and socio- emotional skills.

There is currently no high-quality research into the effectiveness of fitting a hearing device to a child in resolving these issues.

The effects of unilateral hearing loss may not be immediately obvious because your child can hear well with one ear. Before universal newborn hearing screening, many cases of unilateral hearing loss were not detected; and many children with this condition did not show signs of hearing loss.

*Your child will speak,
read and enjoy music.*

What can I do to make listening easier for my child?

All children, including those with a unilateral hearing loss, will benefit from good communication strategies.

- face your child when speaking
- gain your child's attention before speaking to him/her
- When you are in the car, at the table, reading etc, ensure that your child is positioned so that the better ear is closer to the speaker
 - limit excessive distracting noise where possible
 - create a language rich environment at home through play, family conversations, reading, music and singing
 - ensure that your child's carers and teachers are aware of the hearing loss and its implications particularly for noisy situations such as a classroom.



Why is it important to identify where sounds come from?

As your child develops, you may notice that he/she has difficulty telling where a sound is coming from. When you call your child, you may need to tell him/her or give visual cues to show where you are so that he/she can find you.

Telling where a sound comes from is important for safety, particularly when your child is near roads. Good road safety behaviour starts early. Therefore, set a good example by crossing roads at traffic lights, and not between parked cars.

Always remind your child to look to see where a car is coming from.

Can technology help?

There is currently no high-quality evidence on how to best manage unilateral hearing loss in children. If your child is experiencing difficulty, some options that may assist hearing in the affected ear include: a hearing aid, a remote microphone system, sound field amplification, a bone conduction hearing aid, a CROS hearing aid, an implantable hearing aid or a cochlear implant.

These technological options provide variable benefits depending on the listening environments of your child. The use of a device will not “fix” your child’s hearing loss. It enables sounds on the affected side to be audible, but does not restore normal hearing. Some devices are provided by Australian Hearing, and others may be funded by schools or individuals.

Your Australian Hearing audiologist can discuss your child’s specific needs with you and will be able to provide you with more information.

What support is available?

Your Australian Hearing audiology clinic will provide you with advice and ongoing management of your child’s hearing loss. Monitoring of your child’s hearing and middle ear health is essential as changes may occur. Your audiologist can also guide and support you with resources about communication strategies, hearing loss and early intervention services.

The audiology clinic can keep your child’s doctor (a general practitioner, or a paediatrician or an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist) informed of your child’s hearing condition. The ENT specialist can give you information about the medical aspects of your child’s hearing loss.

If you decide against device fitting, your child will be reviewed at critical time points, such as before your child enters school, when your child is in Grade 5, or when you have any concerns about his/her hearing. Australian Hearing recommends that your child’s hearing be tested once a year.

Your Australian Hearing audiologist can provide advice on your child’s hearing needs, and information about early education services.

An assessment by a speech pathologist may be useful to check whether your child’s speech and language development is age-appropriate.

If you would like to speak to another parent of a child with unilateral hearing loss, Parents of Deaf Children (www.podc.org.au) runs a parent mentor program.



You can be connected to your nearest
Australian Hearing Centre by calling **131 797**

Further information and support:

www.aussiedeafkids.org.au

www.hearing.com.au

www.NAL.gov.au

www.hearingexchange.com

www.csdb.org/chip/par_unilateral_loss.html

www.podc.org.au

For information on Cytomegalovirus (CMV)
infection and pregnancy, see factsheet:

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/
factsheets/Pages/cmV-and-pregnancy.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/cmV-and-pregnancy.aspx)