



The Children's Doctor

All you need to know about... Hearing Impairment



Can my child hear?

One in five hundred babies are born with a hearing impairment. The NSW government now offers all newborns a hearing test. This is usually performed prior to discharge from hospital or in the first 7 days of life. By detecting hearing loss soon after birth, early intervention can be offered which increases the likelihood of normal speech and language development. Some children will develop hearing loss at a later stage, despite having a normal newborn hearing test.

You should check your child's hearing if you notice any of the following:

- frequently asks "what?" or "pardon?"
- is unable to follow directions
- has difficulty with concentration or paying attention
- speech is unclear
- language is not as developed as other children the same age

Is the hearing impairment permanent?

Temporary hearing loss is very common in childhood. It frequently follows a cold and is due to an accumulation of fluid in the middle ear ("glue ear"). This will often resolve spontaneously but may sometimes require treatment with antibiotics or insertion of grommets to drain the fluid.

Permanent hearing loss can occur at any time. Some common causes of permanent hearing loss include maternal viral infection during pregnancy, prematurity, family history of deafness, or meningitis. If you are worried about your child's hearing, formal testing should be arranged.

How can I organise a hearing test?

If you are concerned about your child's hearing you should see your general practitioner. They will refer you to a local Audiology centre for formal testing. Testing can be performed in Public Hospitals, Community Health Centres or schools. Young children require specialised assessment in a suitable environment. Jim Patrick Audiology at North Rocks caters well to the needs of young children and are able to perform accurate assessments on children of any age.