

# Unilateral Hearing Loss

## Unilateral Hearing Loss

*Unilateral hearing loss* (UHL) is having an ear with no hearing loss and hearing loss recorded in the other ear. The hearing loss can vary from slight to very severe. UHL can occur at any age. Children with UHL may have problems with school, speech-language development, and social– emotional skills. UHL is difficult to diagnose because the individual may not notice that they have problems hearing in one ear.

Individuals with UHL who have problems hearing may

- get easily frustrated;
- seem overly tired at the end of the day;
- appear not to be paying attention; and/or
- respond incorrectly to questions or requests.

Talk to an audiologist if you notice these problems in yourself or your loved one.

### **UHL can cause a number of difficulties in day-to-day living. If you or a loved one has UHL, one of the following issues may be going on:**

- The individual has trouble finding out where sounds are coming from; this is known as *localization*. Localization is important when listening in groups of people. Localization is also important for safety. For example, if you cannot localize a car horn, you cannot move out of the way. This may impact children who are learning how to ride a bike or anyone who is driving a car.
- The individual has difficulty understanding what people are saying in noisy situations such as in the classroom, at work, or in a restaurant. Problems hearing speakers from another room or from outside are common. Speech can be heard but can be difficult to understand.

Causes of UHL may include

- hearing loss that runs in the family (genetic or hereditary);
- some syndromes;
- certain illnesses;
- head injury; and
- exposure to loud noise.

## Will a hearing aid help?

Some people with UHL benefit from using a hearing aid. It depends on age, amount of hearing loss, and listening demands. Talk with your audiologist about other hearing technologies that may or may not be an option. Your audiologist will help you decide what option will best meet your listening needs.

## How can I help?

- Notice how you are sitting. Talk to others or listen with the “normal” ear facing that person.
- Limit background noise—such as the dishwasher, window air conditioner, fan, TV, or radio—when talking.
- Make eye contact when talking.
- Use facial expressions, such as smiling or frowning.
- Do not talk from another room.

## How can I help protect hearing?

- Loud sounds or ear infections can cause additional hearing loss to individuals with UHL.
- An ear infection may make it harder to hear. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns.
- Wear properly fitting earplugs or earmuffs when attending fireworks, concerts, sporting events, or other places with loud noise.
- Have your hearing checked regularly by an audiologist.
- Keep the lowest volume possible with personal sound devices, TV, and radio.

**NOTES:**

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For more information and to view the entire Audiology Information Series library, visit [www.asha.org/aud/pei/](http://www.asha.org/aud/pei/).

For more information about hearing loss, hearing aids, or referral to an ASHA-certified audiologist, contact:



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