

# Hearing Loss

## Spotlight on: Infants



COMMUNICATION  
ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Better Hearing & Speech Month

Today, almost all babies born in the United States undergo a newborn hearing screening—a major public health success. However, many babies who don't pass their newborn screening still aren't receiving the follow-up care they need to fully thrive. From day 1, babies are communicating with their loved ones. This communication fuels their brain development—making early intervention for any hearing loss critical.

**By the Numbers:** Two to three of every 1,000 children in the United States are born with detectable hearing loss in one or both ears, making this a relatively common condition. More than 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents.

**Beyond the Screen:** Babies who do not pass their initial newborn hearing screening should receive more in-depth hearing testing from a pediatric audiologist as soon as possible. Sometimes, outer ear debris, fluid in a baby's ear, too much noise in the room, or other factors can lead to screening results that require a referral for further testing. **However, if any degree of hearing loss does exist, it is important to address it quickly.**

**Identify the Signs:** Even if a baby passes their newborn hearing screening, parents should be aware of the signs of hearing loss—because it can develop at later ages. Signs to look for include:

- Lack of attention to sounds (**birth–1 year**)
- Doesn't respond to their name (**7 months–1 year**)
- Shows delays in speech and language development (**birth–3 years**)

**Intervention Options:** Early intervention for children with hearing loss is not one-size-fits all—and it depends on both the individual needs of the child and the wishes of the family. Some parents may choose hearing amplification, such as hearing aids, where the focus is on the child developing listening skills and spoken language. Infants as young as 4 weeks old can be fitted with hearing aids. Some may choose to use signed language, such as American Sign Language, with their child. Others opt for combining these approaches. There are a variety of language and communication opportunities for families.

**The Earlier, the Better:** The earlier that hearing loss is identified and intervention begins, the more likely it is that a child will avoid delays in important developmental areas, including speech, language, cognitive-communication skills, and learning.

**Research indicates that children identified with a hearing loss who begin services before 6 months old develop language (spoken or signed) similar to their peers without hearing loss.**



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