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ASHA'S CONSUMER NEWSLETTER

The Prevalence and Incidence of Hearing Loss in Children

- The number of Americans with a hearing loss has evidentially doubled during the past 30 years. Data gleaned from federal surveys illustrate the following trend of prevalence for individuals age 3 years or older with a hearing loss: 13.2 million (1971), 14.2 million (1977), 20.3 million (1991), and 24.2 million (1993).^{1,2} An independent researcher estimates that 28.6 million Americans had an auditory disorder in 2000.³ This estimate is reasonably well within projections from the 1971–1993 trend line that evolved from federal surveys.⁴
- Children who are hard of hearing will find it much more difficult than children who have normal hearing to learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expressions, and other aspects of verbal communication.⁵
- The number of children with disabilities, ages 6–21, who were served in the public schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B in the 2000-01 school year was 5,775,722 (in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico). Of these children, 70,767 (1.2%) received services for hearing. However, the number of children with hearing loss and deafness is undoubtedly higher, since many of these students may have other disabilities as well.⁶ Data by disability are not reported by the Department of Education for ages birth to 5 years.
- Several studies indicate variance in the prevalence of newborns with congenital hearing loss in the United States. The overall estimates are between 1 and 6 per 1,000 newborns.^{7,8} Most children with congenital hearing loss have hearing impairment at birth and are potentially identifiable by newborn and infant hearing screening. However, some congenital hearing loss may not become evident until later in childhood.⁹
- According to Blanchfield et al.,¹⁰ as many as 738,000 individuals in the United States have severe to profound hearing loss. Of these, almost 8% are under the age of 18.
- Among African American, Cuban American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and non-Hispanic White children, it is estimated that approximately 391,000 school-age children in the United States have unilateral hearing loss.¹¹

- According to Niskar and colleagues,¹² approximately 14.9% of U.S. children have low-frequency or high-frequency hearing loss of at least 16 dB HL in one or both ears.
- Profound, early-onset deafness is present in 4–11 per 10,000 children and is attributable to genetic causes in at least 50% of cases.¹³

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