

Types of Paediatric Hearing Loss

There are two primary categories of hearing loss in children:

- congenital (present at birth), and
- acquired (occurring after birth)

Possible causes of congenital hearing loss:

- Infections during pregnancy (German measles, toxoplasmosis and cytomegalovirus)
- Ototoxic medication used during pregnancy (medications that can damage hearing as a side effect)
- Birth complications
- Disorders of the brain or nervous system
- Genetic syndromes, such as Ushers, Down's and Waardenburg's syndromes
- Family history of hearing loss

Possible causes of acquired hearing loss:

- Untreated middle-ear infections
- Other infections such as meningitis, mumps, measles or whooping cough
- Perforation of the eardrum
- Excessive noise, such as fireworks or loud music
- Serious injury to the head
- Ototoxic medication

Frequently, hearing loss in young children is *conductive* (temporary), and caused by earwax or middle ear infections. Many children with temporary hearing loss can have their hearing restored through medical treatment (such as antibiotics or cortisone) or minor surgery.

Some children have *sensorineural* hearing loss, which is permanent. Most of these children have some usable hearing, and children as young as four weeks of age can be fitted with hearing aids. If the child does not respond to hearing aids, a cochlear implant can be considered.