

Hearing & Amplification

Causes of Hearing Loss

What Is The First Step?

If we know what caused the hearing loss, we can research other cases with the same cause to help parents know what to expect and what to do. The best place to find the answer to that question is with a team of professionals who specialize in the diagnosis of hearing loss in children. These medical professionals routinely see many children with a wide variety of causes for their hearing losses. Your primary care provider should be able to provide you the names of audiologists, Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) doctors and genetic specialists in your area.

What can I expect to happen during my first visit with a medical specialist?

There are two goals for a first visit. The first goal is to determine the cause of the hearing loss, if possible, or to narrow down the list of possible causes. The second goal is to determine if medical treatment should begin and the nature of that treatment.

The way the specialist begins the process of finding the cause of the hearing loss is by asking questions. The doctor or genetic counselor will:

1. Review whatever hearing and medical information is already available, including pre-natal and birth history.
2. Ask additional questions about your family's medical history. Professionals will ask you questions about you, your partner, and all your relatives. From this, they will create your family history tree. They also may ask for medical information about some of your family members.
3. Request that additional testing be done. Depending on the areas of concern, some of those tests may include genetic tests that require blood or urine samples, CT or MRI scans, vestibular (balance) tests or ophthalmology (eye) examinations. You will be asked to give your consent before any additional testing is done.

The information from these three areas will provide additional pieces of the puzzle to help find the cause of the hearing loss. If the information cannot identify the cause, it should provide enough clues to determine both what the cause of the hearing loss IS NOT and what the cause of the hearing loss MIGHT BE.

From a geneticist's point of view, the cause of hearing loss will fall into one of three broad categories: (1) Unknown, (2) Non-genetic, or (3) Genetic. This can be an important first step, since it focuses the attention of the investigation into areas that might reveal the cause of the hearing loss AND it saves time, energy, and money by preventing tests that are not likely to reveal the true answer.

In Summary:

- You should expect to be asked questions about your child's and family's medical history.
- You can expect to have additional medical testing recommended.
- If additional testing is done, you should expect to have another visit scheduled to discuss the results of that testing.
- Depending on how much information is obtained during the first visit, a cause for your child's hearing loss may be identified. If medical treatment is recommended, this may also begin.