

Hearing & Amplification

All About Hearing Loss

Types Of Hearing Loss

Hearing losses may be located in the external, middle or inner ear or both. These different types of hearing loss are described below.

Conductive Hearing Loss

If there is a problem in the external or middle ear, a *conductive* hearing loss exists. This means sound is not being conducted properly to the inner ear.

Common causes of conductive hearing loss are wax (cerumen) in the external ear, fluid in the middle ear, or a hole or tear (perforation) in the eardrum. Most types of conductive hearing loss can be treated medically or surgically.

Below are pictures of a normal ear drum, middle ear with fluid, and an eardrum with a perforation.



Normal Eardrum



Middle Ear Fluid



Eardrum Perforation

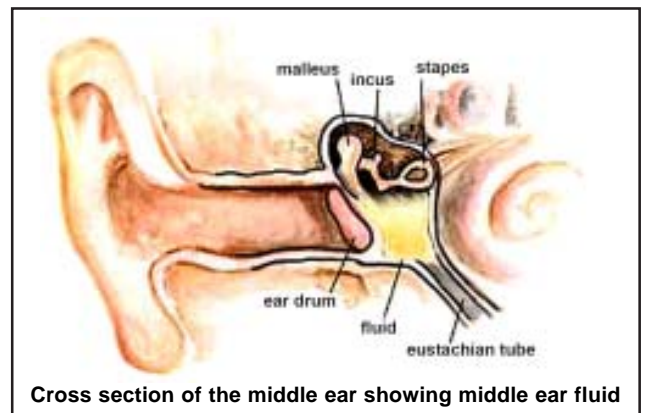
Michael Hawke, M.D., *Diseases of the Ear*, published by Manticore Communications

Sensorineural Hearing Loss

If a problem occurs in the inner ear, the hearing loss is sensorineural. Common causes of sensorineural hearing loss in young children are certain pre-natal infections, lack of oxygen during birth, or genetic factors. Sensorineural hearing loss usually cannot be cured medically or surgically, but the use of hearing aids or other amplifying systems can help children hear and develop speech and language.

Mixed Hearing Loss

Children with sensorineural hearing loss also can develop middle ear problems (such as fluid in the middle ear). This can make the infant's hearing loss worse. When there is a combination of two problems (sensorineural and conductive hearing loss), this is known as a *mixed* hearing loss.



Cross section of the middle ear showing middle ear fluid