

babies & hearing loss

How Do I Get More Information?

This brochure provides general information. You can learn more about how the specialists can help you and your baby by asking them questions. Resource materials and parent-to-parent networks are available.

The following is a list of resources that you and your family may find helpful:

Wisconsin First Step Hotline

www.mch-hotlines.org

(800) 642-7837 voice/TTY

Callers get information on a full range of services and programs for children with special needs, birth to 21. The callers will be provided connection to parent-to-parent networks. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Wisconsin Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/odhh/index.htm>

(608) 266-3118 voice/TTY

The Bureau has six regional offices that provide educational and referral services. They can connect individuals with other parents of deaf or hard of hearing infants as well as other state agencies to assist with specific needs.

National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM)

www.infanthearing.org

This site contains a wealth of information on resources for families and professionals. It has links to family support groups such as the American Society for Deaf Children, AG Bell, Family Voices, and Family Village and professional groups such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Speech Hearing and Language Association.

This brochure is also available in Spanish.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Public Health
Bureau of Community Health Promotion
Program for Children and Youth with Special
Health Care Needs

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A Guide for Families about
Follow-up Medical Care



You recently learned your baby has a hearing loss. Like many other parents and families, you may have questions. You may also be feeling a variety of emotions. It is important to remember that the best thing you can do is enjoy your baby. Babies learn about their world in many ways. Hug, touch, read, sing and talk to your baby as much as possible.

Why Does My Baby Have A Hearing Loss?

A baby can have a hearing loss even if there is no one else in the family who has a hearing loss. There are many possible causes in infancy, including:

- Prematurity
- Medications or drugs
- Infections
- Exposure to chemicals and other toxins during pregnancy
- Genetic factors

Sometimes the cause of a baby's hearing loss can be identified. Other times, the cause may not be clear and you will work with people who will help you understand the loss.

What Happens Now?

Your baby's doctor will help guide you through ongoing care. Your doctor and a hearing specialist, called an audiologist, will work together and make referrals for further medical care soon after your baby's hearing loss is confirmed.

Through a complete assessment, the audiologist determines the type of hearing loss and what this might mean for your baby. The audiologist will:

- Monitor your baby's hearing
- Connect your family to other resources
- Refer to and work closely with other specialists
- Assess for hearing aids or other devices, if appropriate
- Discuss intervention options and referral to Birth to 3



What Can I Learn From The Medical Evaluation?

A medical evaluation is important for every baby who has a hearing loss. This evaluation helps to:

- Identify the cause of your baby's hearing loss
- Determine if your baby has any other medical problems
- Form recommendations for your baby's ongoing health care

Some of the specialists involved in the medical follow-up include Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) physicians and genetic professionals.

ENT Physicians:

An ENT, also called an otolaryngologist, is a doctor who specializes in evaluating and treating ear diseases. All babies with hearing loss should be referred to an ENT. As part of the evaluation, your child will have a physical exam and may have laboratory tests and/or special x-rays.

The ENT, along with the audiologist, will:

- Help you decide what kind of treatment is needed
- Provide monitoring and follow-up care
- Be involved in the assessment for hearing aids and other devices, if appropriate

Genetic Professionals:

All families with a baby who has hearing loss should be offered a referral for genetic counseling, evaluation, and services. Genetic professionals may be able to provide information about the cause of hearing loss, possible associated medical conditions, and the risk of hearing loss for other family members. Clinical geneticists (physicians) and genetic counselors provide a genetic evaluation that includes:

- A review of your family history and medical history
- A physical examination
- Discussion about laboratory tests, including DNA or chromosome testing that may be recommended
- Discussion about additional assessments and ongoing care