

Hearing loss and children- Everything you need to know

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Mysuru ,

Hearing loss is a birth defect that can affect a baby's ability to develop speech and social skills. It can happen when any part of the ear is not working in the usual way. It can range from mild to profound. There are various reasons why a child might be born deaf. Although not knowing the cause of deafness can be very upsetting, it is not always possible to identify the reason said **Dr. Dathathri H A, Consultant ENT, Head & Neck Surgeon Cochlear Implant Surgeon, Columbia Asia Hospital Mysore**

The external deformities can be easily picked up and brought to the attention of the physicians. But Inner ear anomalies which is due to various degrees of loss of hair cells inside the inner ear are difficult to recognize since the child looks normal to the external observation. Compared to other developmental milestones like crawling, sitting, standing, walking etc., development of hearing and speech is less known to the public.

Early recognition and rehabilitation are very critical in management of inborn hearing loss. Mandatory hearing screening at birth in all institutional deliveries can increase the pick-up rate of these hearing loss. Another delay in detection is lack of knowledge about the milestones of hearing development among parents. Mothers should be vigilant about kids who do not respond to loud noise at home by 2 to 3 months of age or if the child does not turn their eyes to sounds by the age of 4 months or if child does not turn the head to sounds by the age of 5 to 6 months or if the baby does not imitate speech and does not

understand simple commands by 9 to 12 months.

The Treatment of hearing loss which is inborn is mainly done through amplification of the sounds, which is usually provided by Powerful Digital Hearing Aids. Up to 70dB hearing loss can be habilitated by these hearing aids. When Hearing Aids are not enough in kids who are born with more than 80 to 90dB hearing loss, Cochlear implants can make the difference. Cochlear implants can provide undisturbed signals, which makes the kids learn the speech faster and efficiently.

If the Child is not recognized at birth or before 6 months of life, it can't develop speech and hence will be neglected by the peer group in childhood and will be deprived of many things in their future lives which can lead to depression.

The expectations of speech development vary with the age of implantation. The kids implanted after the age of 5 years cannot develop clearer speech, although all kids with Cochlear implants hear well. The intensive speech therapy for at least 1 year by the therapist and at home by the dedicated parents can make the child join the mainstream children.

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