

The Developing Child with Unilateral Hearing Loss: CONSIDERING HEARING AID USE

Try a hearing aid. If your child has hearing in the worse ear (i.e., thresholds between 35 – 75 dB) then it may be possible for a hearing aid to ‘balance out’ the child’s hearing ability – meaning provide near normal hearing in the poor hearing ear. Amplification could help with sound location and listening in noise! Children who are deaf in one ear <i>may</i> have too much hearing loss to cause improvement with a standard hearing aid . Ask your child’s audiologist for more information. 	A hearing aid! But he hears fine in one ear! Think back to our analogy with the child who was born with ½ foot. If there was a prosthesis (like a ‘strap on foot’) that would allow the child to walk gracefully with a normal gait, to run similar to, but maybe not as fast, as other children - would it make sense for the child to use it? Would it help him as he is learning to walk? Would it help him fit in better when playing with other children because he could keep up more easily? 
Hearing aid = a brain access tool Brains develop due to constant stimulation. With ¼ of children developing hearing loss in both ears, early stimulation of the poor ear may end up making a real difference in the child’s ability to compensate if all or most hearing is lost in both ears. Think of it as ‘keeping an ear in reserve if the worst happens (and it may!).’ 	How soon should we try a hearing aid? The earlier a child tries amplification and gets used to ‘balanced hearing’ the easier it will be for him or her to adjust to hearing with both ears and want to wear the hearing aid all the time. Waiting until school-age is too late! 
Parent comments on hearing aid use Other parents of children with unilateral hearing loss have tried hearing aids and said: • <i>He doesn’t talk so loud when wearing his aid.</i> • <i>He was missing one half of everything before got his aid.</i> • <i>He hears sounds he never heard before.</i> • <i>He doesn’t interrupt people in group situations now.</i> • <i>It is a very positive thing.</i> • <i>Audiologists and doctors say children with only one good hearing ear will be fine—they are not fine!</i> 	Try it and see.... A hearing aid usually helps a child with unilateral hearing loss, but not always. Adults report that “balanced” hearing makes it easier to listen and overhear when others are talking around them, resulting in less stressful conversations. The only way to tell if it will help is to try a hearing aid and watch for improved listening – the difference may be subtle <i>but important!</i> • Does the hearing aid help the child “catch language” and “keep the teacup full”? Locating sound sources? Listening at a distance or in background noise? 

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