

The Developing Child with Unilateral Hearing Loss: EARS WORK TOGETHER

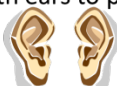
How bad can it be? The good ear will compensate for the bad ear, won't it?

Hearing loss is invisible and difficult to understand, especially when someone seems to hear most sounds or most times but not always.



It is very common to think that because we have two ears that if something is wrong with one ear, the other ear will do the work of two ears.

In reality, we need both ears to perform well in all listening situations.



An analogy to help us understand

Think about a child who was born with only $\frac{1}{2}$ of one foot. We require two feet to equally support the weight of our bodies as we walk.



With only one normal foot, a child will still learn to walk and run, but likely not as fast or smoothly as children with 2 normal feet; especially in rough terrain or when competing in a race.

Can the one good foot really compensate for the $\frac{1}{2}$ foot? No, but having only one good foot works fine in many situations.

What to expect at home

Your baby can hear normally with one ear. As you diaper him, feed him, play with him you will see him respond to sound.

He CAN hear.

You are close to him. It is quiet. He is interested in what you are doing.

Thinking about our analogy, this is like walking on flat ground with plenty of time to get where you want to go.



Rugged terrain

Think again of the child with $\frac{1}{2}$ foot playing with other children in a large park with grassy areas, rocky climbing areas, and an obstacle course to jump, skip and hop.

She can play anywhere she likes with the other children, have fun and get exercise.

She will have difficulty experiencing some of the things to do at the park.

She may need to work harder, may avoid some, or may be able to do it all, only at a slower pace.

Analogies can help understanding but are not perfect

- What do you think "rugged terrain" would be for listening?
- When is it most challenging to listen, even with 2 ears?
- When one foot does not work as well as the other foot there would be times when a child may have some problems. Can you think of when that would be?
- Now think of hearing. What kinds of situations would it be more difficult if you had problem hearing everything well?



A foot and ear are not the same

The analogy of the child with $\frac{1}{2}$ foot is a starting place to understand that 2 ears are really needed, and one ear cannot do the job of two ears.

There is at least one big difference as we think about the child with only one normal foot and your child with only one normal ear – listening is strongly tied to the ability to learn at home and at school! A foot problem will likely not impact learning.



SUGGESTED FOR HOME VISIT 1