

Normal hearing is important for language development, interpersonal communication, acquisition of new knowledge and responsiveness to environmental sounds. Hearing impairment may hinder one's learning and development in language, social and behavioral aspects.

Hearing impairment can be congenital or related to disease, injury or drugs. Mild hearing impairment may be difficult to notice. However, we should not neglect the adverse effects that it may cause.

Signs of Hearing Impairment:



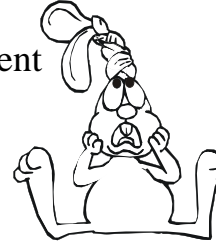
1. Ear Discomfort:

- ❖ Ear pain or stuffiness
- ❖ Discharge or foul smell from the ear
- ❖ Tinnitus



2. Fail to hear properly or comprehend conversation when:

- ❖ Others speak softly or do not face you when speaking
- ❖ Far away from the source of sound (e.g. sitting at the back in a classroom)
- ❖ In noisy environment



3. Performance in class

- ❖ Need to lean forward or tilt your head to hear clearly.
- ❖ Need lip-reading or observation of facial expression to comprehend content of conversation.
- ❖ Difficult to locate the source of sound
- ❖ Always miss the 's' in oral dictation.
- ❖ Performance in subjects requiring listening skill is poorer than other subjects.



4. During conversation

- ❖ Difficult to differentiate some sounds e.g. 'sin' and 'tin'
- ❖ Blurring of speech
- ❖ Poorer oral expression and comprehension as compared with students of similar age
- ❖ Prefers staying alone



Hearing test

Hearing test is the method to check whether your hearing is normal. During the test, need to wear a set of earphones and respond to sounds as instructed by the tester. Hearing test takes a few minutes and hearing impairment can be identified. If hearing impairment is detected, audiological assessment can differentiate its nature (sensori-neural, conduction or mixed). When combined with other assessments, the doctor or audiologist will be able to recommend a management plan for each individual case.



Ways to protect hearing

- ④ Never attempt to clean the ear canals with pointed or hard objects (e.g. ear pick) or put any foreign object into the ears. There is no need to clear the ear canals under normal circumstances because ear wax will move out of the ear canals by a self-cleaning mechanism of the canal skin.
- ④ Seek medical advice if any foreign object gets into the ear accidentally. Never attempt to get it out by yourself because you may end up pushing it further down the ear canal or damaging the ear drum.
- ④ Consider using earplugs during swimming and shampooing to prevent water from entering the ears. Dry the ears immediately afterwards with a soft dry towel or cotton wool balls to prevent discomfort and infection of the ears.
- ④ Loud noise may cause ear discomfort and tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and prolonged exposure to loud noise may result in hearing impairment. Avoid lingering in noisy places such as video game centres, discos and karaoke boxes and playing toys/games that generate extremely loud sounds e.g. air gun. Protect your ears by covering them with hands when exposed to loud noise e.g. construction works, road repair etc.

- ④ Take medicines only under the advice of doctors and pharmacists. Overdosage of certain drugs (e.g. aspirin) can cause tinnitus and hearing impairment.
- ④ Keep the volume at or below “medium”. If 1 is the softest volume and 10 is the loudest, please adjust the volume setting to 5 or below. If you are using more deep-seated earphone, please adjust the volume to 4 or below. Please limit the listening time to less than an hour and avoid using it in noisy environment. Prolonged use of ear phones to hear too loud music may damage the ears. When using others’ headphones, turn down the volume first and then gradually increase it to a suitable level since sudden loud noise may cause discomfort.
- ④ While blowing your nose, press on one of the nostrils and blow out the secretion gently from the other and repeat on the other side. This is to prevent the secretion from infecting the middle ear through the Eustachian tube.
- ④ Avoid injury to the head or the ear to avoid damage to ear.
- ④ Seek medical advice if you have any problem with your hearing and ears. Early detection and treatment can prevent the problem from worsening.
- ④ The Student Health Service of the Department of Health provides hearing test for school children. If you worry about your hearing, you can request for hearing screening during the annual health visit at the health centre.

Do you hear normally?

