

# Health Info to know with Dr. Joe

*Expert advice with Head and Neck Surgeon,  
University of Florida Associate Professor,  
Dr. Joe Parell.*

*Dr. Parell is board certified in Otolaryngology and  
board certified in Facial Plastic Surgery.*

Q: My pediatrician said my newborn child did poorly on his hearing test. Can you tell me what's wrong?

A: Having your infant's hearing tested is extremely important because hearing is the most valuable learning tool for the first three years of life, even more important than vision.. The brain's capacity to learn is most active during that time. Therefore, if the child's hearing is compromised, it may permanently affect his intellectual development. Fortunately, with recent advances in technology, no child need suffer from deafness. Treatment may range from medication to complex surgery, depending on the cause.

Both of our city's hospitals routinely screen newborns for hearing loss. If the results are abnormal, the parents are asked to make an appointment with an otolaryngologist. More precise hearing tests will be done in the otolaryngologist's office to determine the cause of the hearing loss.

Hearing loss is typically a result of one of two causes. First, it may simply be caused by fluid in the middle ear or abnormalities of the ossicles (hearing bones). These problems cause what is called conductive hearing loss. This can be treated by medication, insertion of ventilation tubes or may require reconstruction of the ossicles. Second, hearing loss may be the result of damage to the hearing nerve endings. This type of loss is called sensory neural hearing loss and is more serious. If it is a sensory neural loss, X-rays, blood tests and genetic studies will be ordered to pinpoint the cause. Treatment may range from hearing aids to a cochlear implant. Any significant hearing loss may also require speech therapy.

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