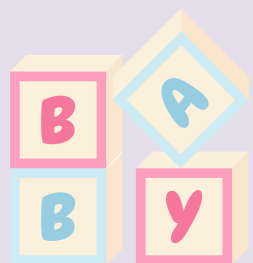


Learning that your friend's child has been diagnosed with hearing loss can be unexpected and emotional. Most children with hearing loss are born to hearing parents, who have no reason to suspect their baby might be deaf. Because hearing loss is invisible, it can be hard to comprehend that the little one you have cuddled, and who has smiled at you, cannot hear well. While most of us associate hearing loss with older people, advances in technology now allows hearing loss to be identified in newborns and young children. Research shows that early detection, combined with early intervention, hearing aids and/or sign language, greatly improves communication outcomes for children.



However, this doesn't make those first weeks any less challenging for parents. Emotional and practical support from loved ones can make a big difference. This leaflet has been created by parents who have been through a similar journey, sharing what we found helpful during this time.



www.aussiedeafkids.org.au

Aussie Deaf Kids is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

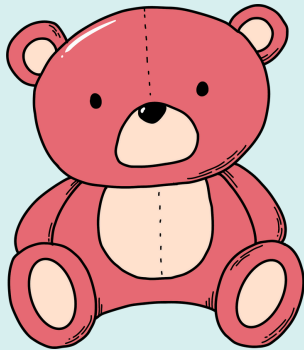
Helping a friend



whose baby has been diagnosed with hearing loss

Emotional help

- Don't be afraid that you won't know what to say—just be yourself.
- Don't feel pressured to have all the answers. Acknowledging their feelings and a simple "I'm here for you" means the world.
- Cry with them, laugh with them and, most importantly, listen to them. Listen with an open mind. Sometimes parents need to talk without seeking advice.
- Let them know you care and will be there for them when they need you.
- Families whose baby has been diagnosed with a hearing loss will be very busy attending appointments, so it is a good idea to call before visiting.
- Even if they say they don't need help, it doesn't mean a gesture of support and friendship won't be welcome.
- Support the family in the decisions they make about their baby's future. They would have given it a lot of thought.



With love, patience, and support, families of children with hearing loss adapt and build fulfilling lives together. Your kindness, no matter how small, can make a big difference.

Practical help

- Prepare a healthy meal for them that can be frozen or give a voucher for a meal delivery service. Some special cheeses and bread or fresh fruit are easy to grab and nutritious when they are busy or tired.
- Offer to pick up bread and milk on your way over for a visit.
- Encourage them to have fun - organise to have coffee, go on a picnic or look after the baby and let them go to the movies together.
- If there are other children in the family, they would like some special attention too. You could read them a book when visiting or take them to the park for a play. Baby sitting the siblings when the family has appointments is another great way to help.

What can you say?

Here are some supportive phrases you can use:

- "How are YOU going?"
- "I know this must feel overwhelming, but please remember we are here for you."
- "What can I do to help right now?"

When our baby was diagnosed with hearing loss, it felt overwhelming at first. But the love and support from our family and friends made all the difference. A simple meal, a listening ear, or just someone saying, 'You've got this', reminded us we were not alone on this journey. That support gave us the strength to focus on what mattered most—our child.

Facts about hearing loss in children

- Hearing loss occurs in 1 to 2 babies per 1000 born.
- The tests used to diagnose a baby with hearing loss are reliable.
- Babies who are diagnosed early and start wearing hearing aids and attending early intervention by 6 months of age have similar speech and language outcomes as hearing children when they start school
- Most children born with a hearing loss will benefit from hearing aids.
- Around 10 percent of children with a severe to profound loss will benefit from a cochlear implant.
- Hearing aids and cochlear implants are not like glasses – they don't simply "correct" hearing in the way glasses correct vision. They assist the child to hear and develop speech and language.
- Many families whose child has a hearing loss learn to sign to their child.
- Young babies can start to communicate their needs using sign.
- The main priority for parents is usually to communicate with their child by whatever means best suits their child and family. Communication options can include spoken language, sign language, or a mix of both.

