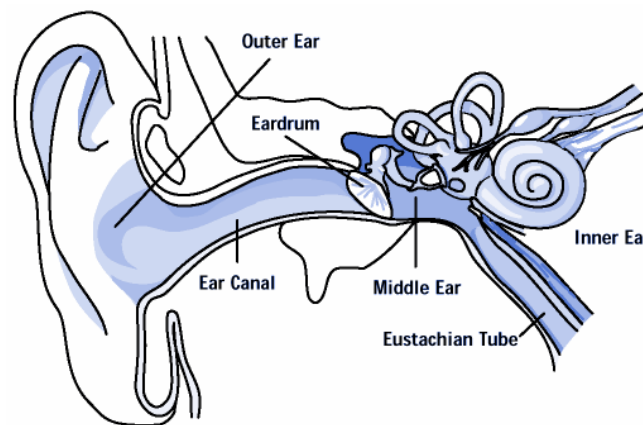


## A Conductive Hearing Loss

There are two types of hearing loss: **Conductive** and **Sensori Neural**.

**Conductive** hearing loss affects those parts of the ear that collect the sound signals and direct them towards the inner ear. This consists of the outer ear, the ear canal, the eardrum and the three small bones in the middle ear. At the middle ear sound vibrations are converted to electrical impulses that travel along the auditory nerve to the brain.



A **Conductive** hearing loss may be due to malformation or absence of the outer ear, malformation of the middle ear bones, glue ear or a perforated eardrum. It may be a mild, moderate or fluctuating loss.

**Glue Ear** is the most common cause of conductive hearing loss in children. The Eustachian Tube connects the middle ear to the back of the throat. It helps to equalise the air pressure on both sides of the eardrum. If this tube becomes blocked, air cannot enter the middle ear cavity. As a result, fluid is produced in the middle ear and this hinders the movement of the three small bones. As time goes on, the fluid becomes thicker and takes on the consistency of glue. If the fluid becomes infected, the whole middle ear and eardrum can become inflamed, producing pus. This can be very painful. In certain cases, the fluid will be removed under anaesthetic and a grommet inserted into the eardrum to maintain

A grommet is tiny,  
smaller than a match  
head



normal air pressure in the middle ear and prevent the fluid building up again.

Although it often responds well to treatment, some children get recurrent glue ear. In chronic cases the child may be offered low-powered hearing aids on a temporary basis.

Listening with a conductive hearing loss is like listening to the television with the sound turned down too low or listening with your head under the bathwater! Most of us have experienced it to a certain degree when we have a heavy cold and our ears are 'blocked.'

### **Identifying Signs**

- ❖ History of recurrent ear infections, mouth breathing, snoring, catarrh, ear discharge
- ❖ Need to have the TV turned up loud
- ❖ May appear dreamy or distracted
- ❖ Poor attention and listening
- ❖ Not turning when called
- ❖ May be withdrawn
- ❖ Wait for cues from others in the class
- ❖ Find it difficult to hear when there is background noise
- ❖ Cannot hear clearly in a group situation
- ❖ Have unclear speech / delayed language
- ❖ Feel insecure and confused - this may be reflected in a change in behaviour
- ❖ Give the impression of "being able to hear when they want to."
- ❖ Have difficulties with peers in the playground

### **How to help pupils with a conductive hearing loss**

- ❖ Speak clearly - use a strong voice, speak at a natural speed and normal rate. Try to use whole phrases or sentences, not single words.
- ❖ Repeat what other pupils are saying - the pupil with a hearing loss may not hear their comments, questions or answers, particularly if the pupil talking is seated behind.
- ❖ When talking, try to ensure you are close to the pupil and that they can see your face and lips. Get down to the pupil's level if necessary. Don't speak to the class while writing on the board.

- ❖ Don't hide your mouth - face the pupil and try not to cover your mouth with your hands.
- ❖ Use lively facial expressions and gestures
- ❖ Make sure you have the pupil's attention before you start - a pupil with a hearing loss may only look up when your voice gets louder and may therefore miss the introduction.
- ❖ Cue in the pupil when changing topic or the subject of a lesson.
- ❖ Try to make sure that only one person talks at a time.
- ❖ Reduce background noise; use quiet corners for listening and small group work.
- ❖ New or key vocabulary should be written on board, or rehearsed before the lesson.
- ❖ Check the pupil's comprehension frequently.
- ❖ Use visual cues as well as verbal references to the topic discussed.
- ❖ When giving a practical demonstration, explain what you are going to do before you do it. It is difficult for the pupil to look at your face and at what you are doing at the same time.
- ❖ Be aware that PE lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes are especially difficult. When the pupil's hearing is particularly poor, it may be necessary to provide the opportunity for an activity indoors with a few friends in a quieter environment.

### **Useful Reading**

- ❖ *Glue Ear: A Guide for Parents*
- ❖ *Deaf Friendly Teaching*
- ❖ *Deaf Friendly Schools*

All the above are available online as downloads from the National Deaf Children's Society. You need to become a member, but membership is free and you can join online. [www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)

- ❖ *Guidelines for Mainstream Teachers with Deaf Children in their Classes* - RNID £6.99. Can be ordered online at [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)