

## Types of Hearing Loss

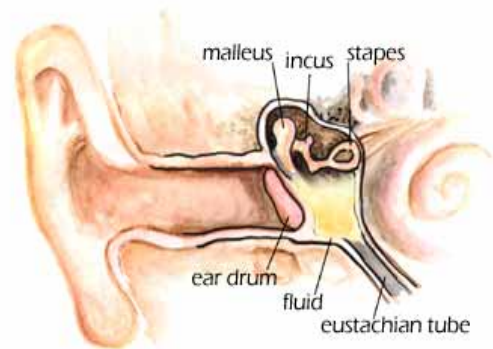
Hearing losses may be located in the external, middle or inner ear or both. These are different types of hearing loss.

### Conductive Hearing Loss

If there is a problem in the external or middle ear, a conductive hearing loss exists. This means sound is not being conducted properly to the inner ear.

Common causes of conductive hearing loss are wax (cerumen) in the external ear, fluid in the middle ear, or a hole or tear (perforation) in the eardrum. Most types of conductive hearing loss can be treated medically or surgically.

**Cross section of the middle ear showing middle ear fluid**



Normal Eardrum      Middle Ear Fluid      Eardrum Perforation  
*Michael Hawke, M.D., Diseases of the Ear, published by Manticore Communications*

### Sensorineural Hearing Loss

If a problem occurs in the inner ear, the hearing loss is sensorineural.

Common causes of sensorineural hearing loss in young children are certain pre-natal infections, lack of oxygen during birth, or genetic factors.

Sensorineural hearing loss usually cannot be cured medically or surgically, but the use of hearing aids or other amplifying systems can help children hear and develop speech and language.

### Mixed Hearing Loss

Children with sensorineural hearing loss also can develop middle ear problems (such as fluid in the middle ear). This can make the infant's hearing loss worse. When there is a combination of two problems (sensorineural and conductive hearing loss), this is known as a *mixed* hearing loss.

### Auditory Neuropathy

Children with Auditory Neuropathy present with a unique set of hearing test results, including present OAE's (suggesting normal outer hair cell function) but absent ABR findings (suggesting neural conduction dysfunction).

Typically, these children have poor speech perception abilities and hearing loss may be mild to profound. These children vary considerably in performance and in ability to benefit from hearing aids.