

Essential Links

Parent Links

Revised 2009

Understanding Hearing Levels: What Type of Hearing Loss Do I Have?

Adapted from Boys Town National Research Hospital

The ear has three major parts: the outer, middle and inner ear. The types of hearing loss depends on what part of the ear is affected.

The outer ear is the part that can be seen and includes the ear canal. The middle ear includes the ear drum, three middle ear bones (ossicles) and the eustachian tube. Hair cells are in the inner ear, or cochlea. Nerve fibers attached to the hair cells communicate with the brain.

A hearing problem located in the outer or middle ear is called a conductive hearing loss. This type of hearing loss is more likely to respond to medical or surgical treatment.

A hearing problem in the inner ear is called a sensorineural hearing loss. This kind of hearing loss is usually permanent.

A problem involving the outer or middle ear and inner ear is called a mixed hearing loss.

A physician who specializes in treatment of hearing and the ear are otolaryngologist or otologist. A consultation is important to determine if treatment would be beneficial or if additional tests are necessary. It is also important to determine whether other health problems are related to the hearing loss.

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