

What is an Otolaryngologist?

An ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor (also called an otolaryngologist) is a physician whose specialty includes determining the cause of a hearing loss; identifying risk factors for hearing loss; and evaluating and treating ear problems. This type of doctor can tell you if there is a medical condition in your child's outer, middle, or inner ear that is causing the hearing loss by asking some questions and doing a medical examination. An ENT doctor with knowledge and experience with childhood hearing loss can determine if medical and/or surgical treatment may be appropriate for your child. If so, the ENT doctor will then provide these service, as well as provide long term monitoring and also follow-up with your child's pediatrician or primary health care provider. The ENT doctor can provide information and guidance on your child's candidacy for hearing aids, assistive listening devices and/or surgery; bone anchored hearing aids and cochlear implants.

An ENT who has training and experience to evaluate and treat infants and young children will offer the best care for your child.

Below are some questions you may want to ask your ENT. These questions were suggested by New Jersey EHDI Hearing Evaluation Council (advisory board) members and/or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Questions to ask when scheduling an appointment:

1. Do I need a referral from my child's pediatrician/primary care provider?
2. Do you accept my insurance?
3. What is the earliest appointment I can get for my child?
4. How long will the appointment take?
5. Are there things I should do to prepare my child for the appointment?
6. Do you frequently provide services to young children?
7. Do you have experience in evaluating and treating babies and children with hearing loss?
8. What age group of children have you worked with?
9. What type of equipment do you use to test for hearing loss?
10. Where will the treatment/testing take place – will this be in your office or at a hospital?
11. How do I make sure an interpreter will be present (if you need a sign language interpreter or you do not speak English)

Questions to ask during the appointment:

1. How will you share the results of this exam with my child's pediatrician/primary care provider?
2. May I have a copy of the hearing test results? (Attach and explain the audiogram or other information to this form.)
3. Do I need to schedule a follow-up appointment?

Questions to ask if your child has a hearing loss:

1. Do you have the most recent report from my child's audiologist (hearing specialist)?
2. What type of hearing loss does my child have (sensorineural, conductive, mixed, auditory neuropathy/auditory dys-synchrony)? Please explain these terms and my child's type of hearing loss.
3. Should I make appointments with other health professionals? For example, an eye doctor or a geneticist (A clinical geneticist is a doctor who specializes in diagnosing and caring for people with genetic conditions)? Who would you recommend and how do I contact them?
4. Would you suggest genetic counseling for our family (A genetic counselor is a health care professional who talks with people about the risk for genetic conditions and provides counseling and support)?
5. Are there other tests that my child needs? For example, brain scans (CT, MRI); heart tests (EKG); and blood or urine tests, or both. What will these tests tell you about my child's hearing loss?
6. Can you tell if my child's hearing loss will change or get worse?
7. Is there some cause for my child's hearing loss?
8. How do I describe these results to family members?
9. What treatments are available? For example, ear tubes, other surgery, or cochlear implants?
10. Would my child benefit from a hearing aid? If so, how?
11. Will you be able to write a prescription that says my child has been medically cleared to wear hearing aids?
12. What do I do about ear wax build-up, since the hearing aid's earmold may push the wax back into my child's ear?
13. Besides hearing aids, what are some other things that will help my child to communicate? For example, a cochlear implant, sign language, cued speech, a combination, etc.?
14. Will it be possible for my child to get a cochlear implant? Where can I go for more information and when should I do this?
15. How often will we meet with you, onetime or ongoing? Will you talk with my child's other health professionals? For example, the audiologist, primary care provider, early interventionists?
16. Do I need to limit my child's activities in any way?
17. Do I need to have my other children's hearing tested?
18. Would my child benefit from referral to a craniofacial team?