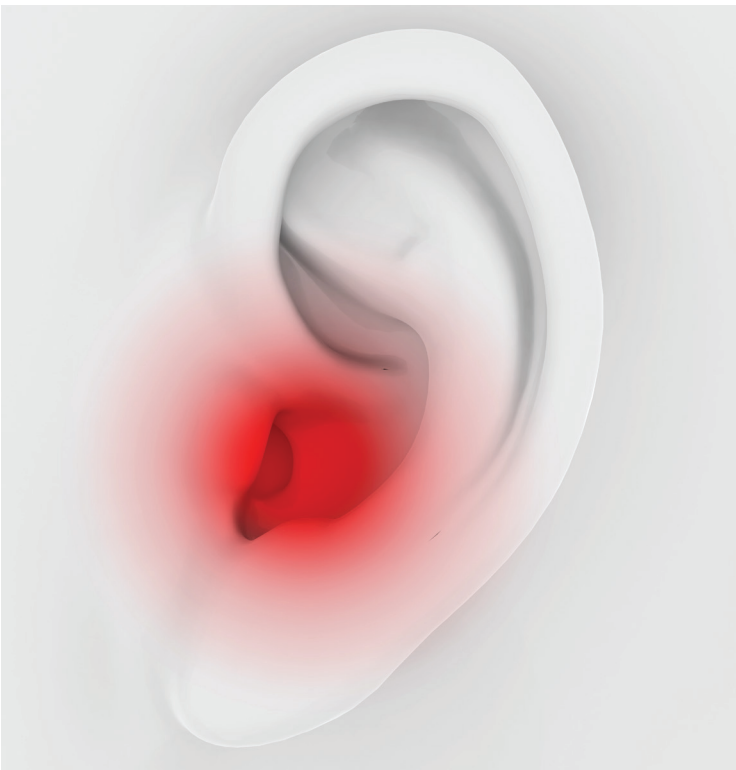


Hearing loss: Cause of hearing loss.

NID Training Disability Diary

- Compiled by Dr Jean Mitchell



Introduction

There are many potential causes of hearing loss. It can be hereditary, as a result of medical conditions, trauma, or even noise. Medical conditions like allergies, head colds, ear infections, dental problems and even impacted earwax (cerumen) can contribute to hearing loss. Any trauma or injury to the head or ear structures can result in temporary or permanent hearing damage. Hearing loss as a result of being exposed to loud noises from machinery, music, traffic, is very common in our sound-filled world.

Discussion

The onset of hearing loss is usually classified as prelingual and post-lingual. Pre-lingual deafness refers to hearing loss that has occurred before the person has begun to speak, while post-lingual deafness refers to hearing loss that has occurred after the acquisition of speech (Bell, 2013).

There are many causes of pre-lingual, non-hereditary hearing loss, including prenatal infections, illnesses and conditions that occur at birth or shortly after. These conditions include prematurity, maternal diabetes, toxemia during pregnancy, lack of oxygen before, during or after birth, and the malformation of ear structures. Illnesses of mother or infant can also be a cause of hearing loss. Illnesses such as intra-uterine infections, rubella (German measles), cytomegalovirus and the herpes simplex virus (Skrebneva, 2015). Pre-lingual hearing loss can result in difficulty learning to read and learn. It might also be the cause of delayed social development (Camarata, et al., 2018).

Post-lingual or acquired hearing loss refers to hearing that is lost after a spoken language has been acquired, in fact, most people with hearing loss have post-lingual deafness. Examples of conditions that can result in post-lingual hearing loss include bacterial meningitis (an infection of the spinal fluid) and a temporary, but recurrent infection of the middle ear (otitis media). If these infections are ignored a build-up of fluid can result, rupturing the eardrum and causing permanent conductive hearing loss. Other diseases that can affect hearing include, measles, encephalitis, chicken pox,

influenza and mumps (Heward, 2009).

Conclusion

It is crucial to consider the age of the onset of hearing loss as hearing plays a key part in the acquisition of a spoken language, literacy and cognition. Professionals seem to agree that children who have had normal hearing for a reasonable length of time in childhood will have a good chance of maintaining and using the language and communication skills they have learned. It goes without saying that the earlier hearing impairment is detected and treated, the better it will be for the affected individual.

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