

Degrees and Effects of Hearing Loss

Decibels (dB)	Degree	Effect on language and speech development
0-15 dB	None	Normal hearing.
16-20 dB	Slight	May have difficulty hearing faint or distant speech, especially in noisy areas. Speech/language not likely to be affected. May need assistive listening technology in classroom situations.
21-40 dB	Mild	May miss a considerable amount of speech depending on noise levels, distance from speaker, and configuration of hearing loss, not hear consonants sounds (all letters except a, e, i, o, u) especially if loss in higher frequency range, have difficulty understanding speech if not in line of vision of speaker and speech is quiet.
41-55 dB	Moderate	Will miss between 50-100 percent of speech without use of appropriate amplification. Will have delayed speech-language development and vocal quality may be affected.
56-70 dB	Moderate to Severe	Without amplification, will miss almost 100 percent of speech information. School situations requiring vocal information will require assisted listening devices. Delays in language and speech are common and the voice may be monotone.
71-90 dB	Severe	Amplification is required to hear spoken language, identify environmental sounds, and detect all speech sounds. If hearing loss occurs before the child has learned to speak, oral speech and language will not develop spontaneously, and can be severely delayed. If the loss is after the development of speech, then speech is likely to deteriorate in production and vocal quality.
91 + dB	Profound	May be able to feel loud auditory vibrations without amplification. With amplification, may be able to detect sounds. May rely on vision for communication and learning, rather than audition. Speech and language will not develop spontaneously. <i>Table adapted with permission from: Relationship of Hearing Loss to Listening and Learning Needs. www.successforkidswithhearingloss.com</i>



Maternal Child Health section
www.health.state.mn.us

For questions about this document or to obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-3760 or email health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us.

Reviewed 10/01/2017