

# What does this diagnosis mean for my role as a parent?



## What do I need to do right now?

Finding out your baby has a hearing loss is a shock. You may have some questions, such as:

- How do I communicate with my baby?
- How is my baby different from other babies?
- Can I and should I go to playgroup or a first-time parents group?

Fortunately, what your baby needs most from you after a diagnosis of hearing loss is all those things that parents are so good at: touching, communicating, playing, comforting and loving. Do what you have done before and what you would be doing if you hadn't had the diagnosis. You will need to learn many new things and make some important decisions, but enjoy your baby while you are doing that and settle into a comfortable routine. Keep in mind the following:

- Cuddle, comfort, rock, smile at and sing to your baby. These are forms of communication along with speaking and using sign language.
- Communicate and play with your baby as you would normally. Remember, your baby is able to respond in many ways to your sounds, eye contact, facial expressions and touch.

## How do I work with professionals?

Best results are achieved when parents and professionals work as partners. The job of professionals is to share their knowledge with you so that you can make fully informed decisions on behalf of your child and family. You are the ones who make the ultimate decisions. Keep in mind the following:

- Play an active role in planning your baby's future. You have your baby's best interests at heart and parents are natural advocates for their children.
- Take the time you need to make decisions. You don't need to rush, although of course it isn't a good idea to take months.
- It is always possible to change your decision at a later time.
- Speak up about your concerns and worries.
- Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers.

- Ask your baby's doctor and audiologist to write down the main points they have discussed with you. If you would like more information, ask your audiologist to give you some additional written information. There are lots of websites that might be helpful and interesting, including: <http://www.aussiedeafkids.com>, <http://www.hearing.com.au>, <http://www.nacs.org.uk> and [www.deafchildren.org.au](http://www.deafchildren.org.au)
- Store all the information you have about your baby's hearing loss in one place.
- Allow people to help and support you and your family. Ask for help when you need it.
- Be gentle on yourself – take time out when you need it.
- Take one step at a time – great journeys start with a single step.<sup>1</sup>

After your baby's diagnosis there is a lot of new information to take in about hearing and communication. Don't worry if you can't take it all in at once, as there will be many opportunities to ask questions along the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Aussie Deaf Kids, [cited 5 July 2006], *Building blocks – A parent guide for families whose baby has been diagnosed with a hearing loss*, [website <http://www.aussiedeafkids.com>]