

# Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss

Sudden sensorineural hearing loss (SSHL), also called sudden deafness, is a rapid change in hearing often in less than 72 hours which affects the cochlea otherwise known as the inner ear.

Sudden changes in hearing can be related to:

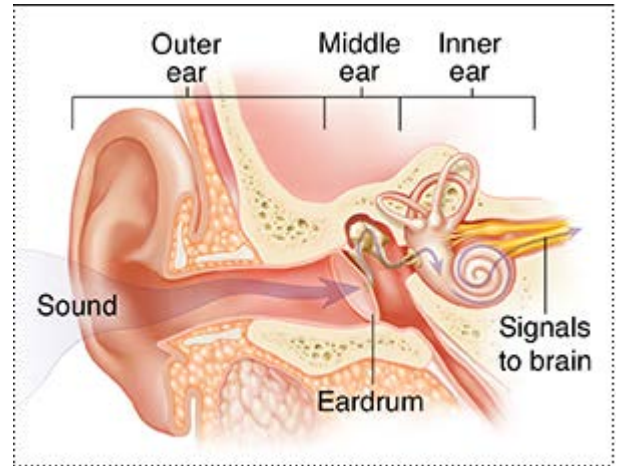
- Ear wax
- Water in the ear
- Eustachian tube dysfunction
- Ear congestion with a head cold/allergies

These causes could result in a conductive hearing loss.

Sudden changes in hearing *may* be related to:

- Viral infections
- Head trauma
- Certain drugs
- Vascular issues
- Autoimmune diseases
- Inner Ear disorders
- Neurological disorders

These issues will often result in a sensorineural hearing loss.



A **sensorineural hearing loss** will affect the inner ear and is considered a **permanent** hearing loss.

A **conductive hearing loss** will affect the outer or middle ear and is generally considered to be **temporary**.

However, when a **SSHL** occurs there is a **potential for treatment!**

Symptoms of a sudden change in hearing are:

- A feeling of fullness in the ear
- Hearing loss
- Tinnitus

In the case of SSHL sometimes dizziness and sound distortion will be present as well.

As the symptoms of a sudden change in hearing are often the same whether it be a conductive or sensorineural issue it is of utmost importance that a hearing test be completed. The determination of the type of hearing loss would greatly impact the course and timeliness of treatment by ENT.

## Quick Facts

- 5-20 out of 100,000 persons per year are affected by SSHL.
- There is a 50% chance SSHL may spontaneously recover.
- SSHL affects males and females equally.
- Half of patients with SSHL will experience dizziness.
- A SSHL is considered an ear emergency as the sooner treatment is initiated the better the outcome (within 72 hours).
- There is 2-4 week window for treatment.
- 80% of patients treated within 2 weeks of onset showed SOME degree of improvement.
- High dose steroids is the preferred treatment.