



## Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss

### What is Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss?

Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss is the sudden loss of hearing in the ear. The loss usually occurs in one ear and can be variable how much hearing is lost. It can occur over a period of hours up to three days. You may not notice the hearing loss until you try and do something such as put the phone to your ear.

The condition occurs in 5-20 people per 100 000 of the population.

### What causes Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss?

In sudden sensorineural hearing loss there is thought to be some form of damage or insult to the cochlea (the organ of hearing). There are many causes of sudden sensorineural hearing loss, but for many patients the exact cause of their hearing loss isn't found.

Some of the causes include:

- Idiopathic (unknown)
- Viral infection of the inner ear
- Blood vessel disorders
- Immune disorders (autoimmune inner ear disease)
- Drugs that have a toxic effect on the ear
- Increased fluid inside the inner ear (Meniere's disease)
- Very rarely a benign tumour growing on the nerves of hearing and balance (<1% chance).

### What symptoms can you have?

- Tinnitus or ringing in the ear
- Distortion of sound in the ear
- Imbalance or dizziness
- A blocked or full feeling in the ear

### How is a diagnosis made?

A diagnosis is usually made based on history, examination and a hearing test. During the COVID Crisis we are still able to arrange hearing tests for urgent patients. Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss meets this criteria, so we will arrange a hearing test prior to your appointment.

You may also require an MRI scan. This will be discussed with your doctor.

### How is Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss treated?

Corticosteroids are commonly given, this is because steroid medication may improve the recovery of hearing, by reducing inflammation and swelling of the cochlea (hearing organ).

Oral corticosteroid tablets are usually the first line treatment however there is some early evidence to suggest that oral steroids shouldn't be given to patients with COVID 19. For this reason, during the COVID 19 crisis, if your doctor decides you need treatment this will most likely be steroid injections into the ear.

**Will my hearing recover?**

Hearing is more likely to recover if you are <65 years, don't have complete hearing loss and don't have dizziness associated with the sudden hearing loss. Usually the greatest recovery occurs in the first two weeks which is why quick diagnosis is important.

There are options available to you if your hearing doesn't recover including the use of a hearing aid. These options can be discussed with your doctor.

**More information on Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss:**

American Academy of Otolaryngology Patient Information Summary

Cut and paste the following link into your browser

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0194599819859884>