



Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss

You likely have sudden sensorineural hearing loss. This is a frustrating problem. The ear will appear normal on examination. A comprehensive hearing test is needed to confirm and determine the severity of the hearing loss. It is not due to a bacterial infection. Antibiotics will not help. Usually, it is not possible to determine the exact reason for the sudden hearing loss. Possible causes include a blood supply insult to the inner ear, a virus, trauma, rupture of inner ear membranes, or an autoimmune inflammatory disease. It may be one of those problems that "just happens." Laboratory tests may be ordered. There is not a medication which will always resolve the hearing loss. Prednisone is an anti-inflammatory steroid that may be helpful for some patients. It is taken by mouth. It is taken in high doses and ideally should be started as soon as possible after hearing loss onset. Mild hearing loss may resolve without treatment. In most cases, severe hearing loss will not respond to prednisone. Moderate amounts of hearing loss seem to gain the most benefit from prednisone. If prednisone is not helpful, application of middle ear steroid solution is a recommended option. This is an office procedure. It is an additional expense and is in no way 100% effective. The steroid solution is placed into the middle ear through the eardrum. It then passes into the inner ear to hopefully improve the sudden inner ear hearing loss. The procedure may be repeated once a week for three weeks. A benign growth around the inner ear may be a less common cause for sudden sensorineural hearing loss. An MRI of the inner ear and brain may be ordered. Follow up hearing tests every 6 months may be recommended to determine if the hearing loss is progressive. If the hearing loss does not improve with treatment, there is a small chance it will spontaneously improve within the next several months. However, most are left with a permanent hearing loss. Depending on the severity of the hearing loss, a hearing aid may be an option.