



# Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss

[www.eartroubles.com](http://www.eartroubles.com)



By Damien Howard PhD

# This book



- This book is to help parents and families understand more about what happens when children's middle disease causes them to have Conductive Hearing Loss
- If you would like to know more go to [www.eartroubles.com](http://www.eartroubles.com).

# Listening problems



- Children with middle ear disease (otitis media) often have Conductive Hearing Loss. They can be
  - easily frustrated and naughty
  - demanding, argue a lot or be sulky at home
  - often in trouble at school and/or
  - can often be quiet, shy and anxious
  - may think they are dumb.

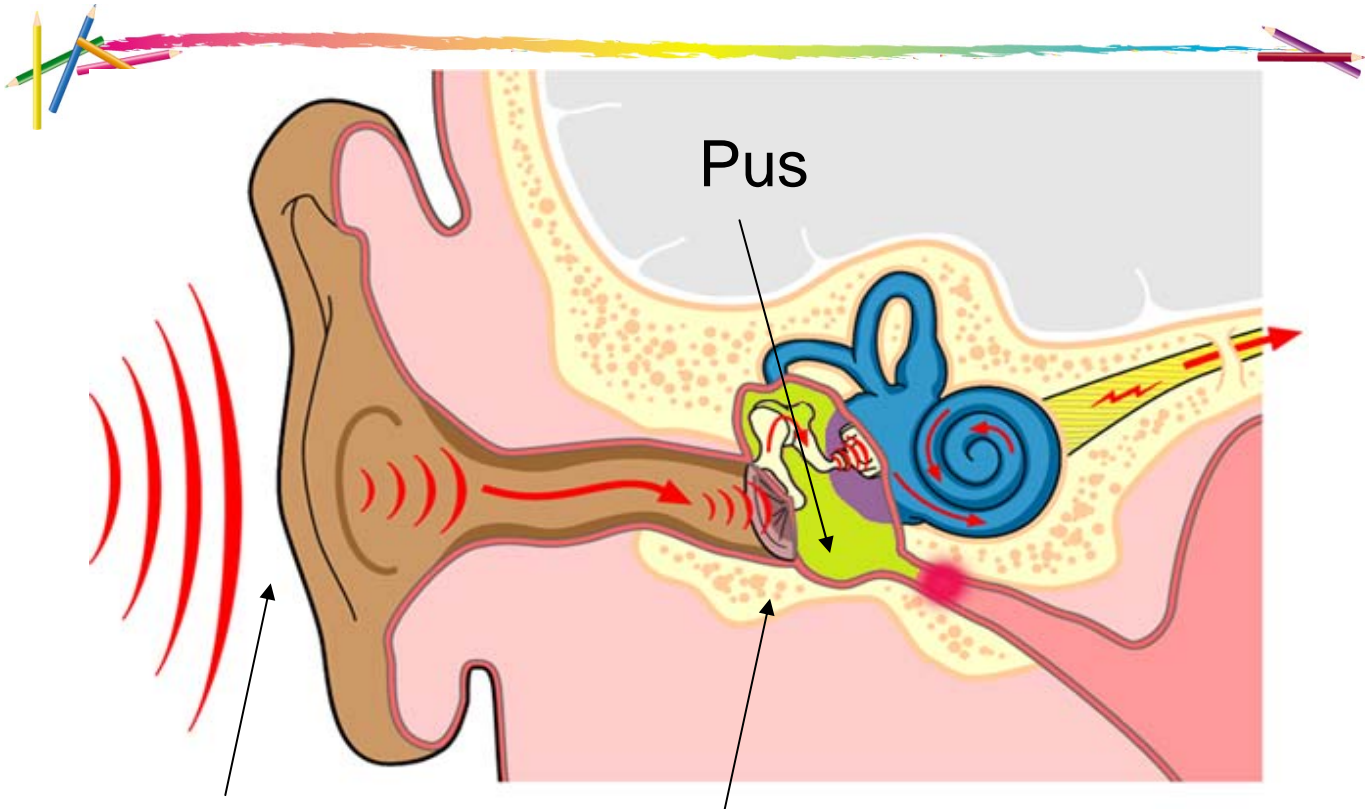


# Otitis media



- Is middle ear disease. It is a common childhood illness experienced by 90% of children. It is the most common reason children visits GPs. Some children experience persistent otitis media which can result in regular conductive hearing loss.

# With otitis media



Outside of ear

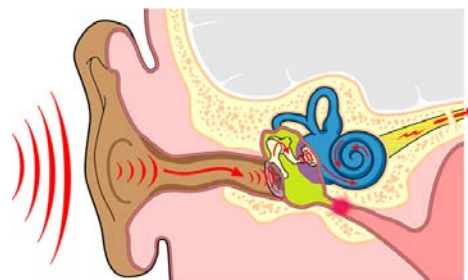
Ear drum

It is harder for sound to be conducted through the middle ear because of mucus (pus) build up. Sometimes this build up also causes the eardrum to burst

# How do we hear?



- Sound is caught by the outside part of the ear and moves down the ear canal to the eardrum.
- The sound makes the eardrum vibrate, which moves some small bones.
- The small bones help transmit the sound onto the brain.
- The brain then works out what the sound is.



# Conductive Hearing Loss

- When sound can't get through the middle ear it is called Conductive Hearing Loss (CHL). Otitis media (glue ear) often causes Conductive Hearing Loss

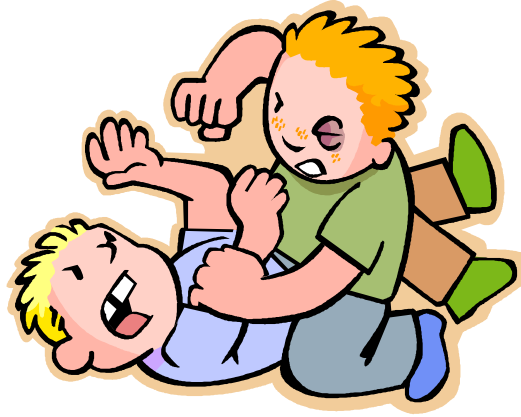


# How many kids have it?



- Many young children have conductive hearing loss.
- In early childhood classes one third of children have conductive hearing loss at any time.
- In many Aboriginal communities most children have it.





What can happen when  
children have  
Conductive Hearing  
Loss?



# At home

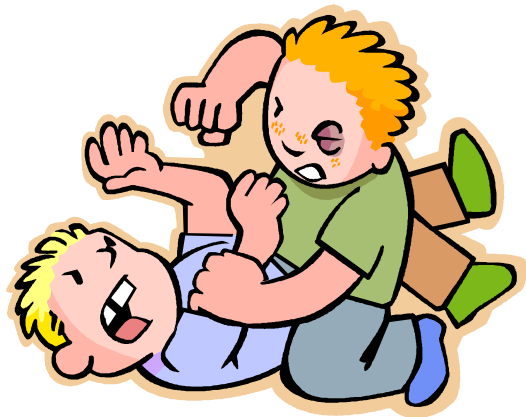


- Children may not understand what is said to them
- Parents may think they are just being naughty
- Children may be demanding, argue a lot and/or sulk.
- Parents may blame themselves for being 'not good enough parents'
- Others can blame them for not managing their child better

# At childcare



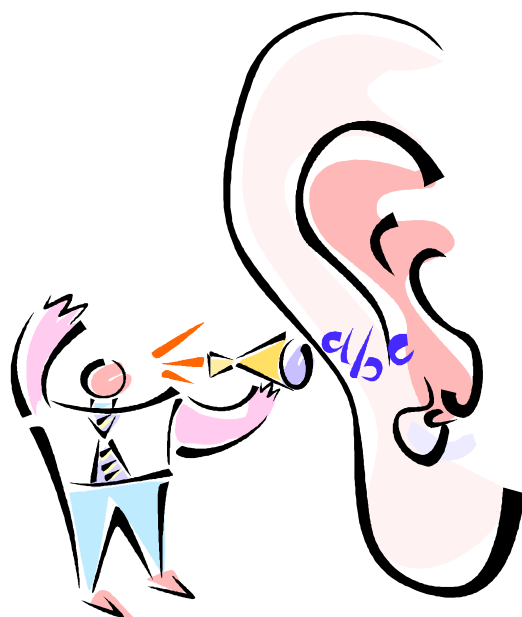
- Children may have difficulties participating at childcare
- They can be seen as
  - aggressive
  - immature
  - over indulged
  - too shy
  - over sensitive



# At school



- Children with CHL are often seen as having behaviour problems and difficulties learning, especially when in large class groups and/or noisy classrooms



# ‘They can hear when they want to’



- Conductive Hearing Loss comes and goes with children's ear infections. Even when they have a Conductive Hearing Loss children may cope if is quiet and they are talking to a familiar person about a familiar topic. Having trouble listening only at particular times makes some people think “they can hear if they want to”.

# Differences with age



- Infant, toddler, and pre-school children with CHL often display aggressive and demanding behaviour. While seven-to-ten-year olds can be the same or may be quiet, sulky and withdrawn. Teenage boys with a history of otitis media are more likely to be defensive and have behaviour problems. Generally girls are more likely to be less socially confident than their peers. Many but not all children with CHL respond in these ways.

# Kids think they are dumb



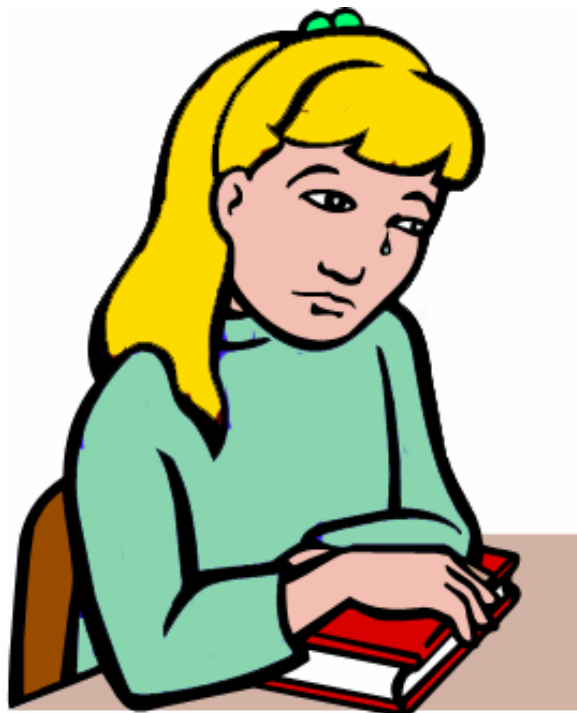
- Children with listening problems have trouble knowing what to do from listening to instructions.
- They also see that other children can understand what to do from verbal instructions, so think they must be 'dumb'.



# May feel left out



- Children often feel left out of social groups when it is hard for them to understand what is said. They are often sensitive and may get upset about anything else that makes them feel they are being left out or rejected.



# Need help



- Children with CHL may need extra help to do things. They especially need help that involves showing as well as telling. But they may feel shamed if they get help in front of others. They may even sometimes refuse help so others don't think they are dumb.



# Reading



- Children often have difficulty learning to read and with spelling.



# Teasing

- Children with CHL may tease others, especially when it is noisy at school. Other children, parents and teachers can get annoyed with them for this.



# Talking when quiet



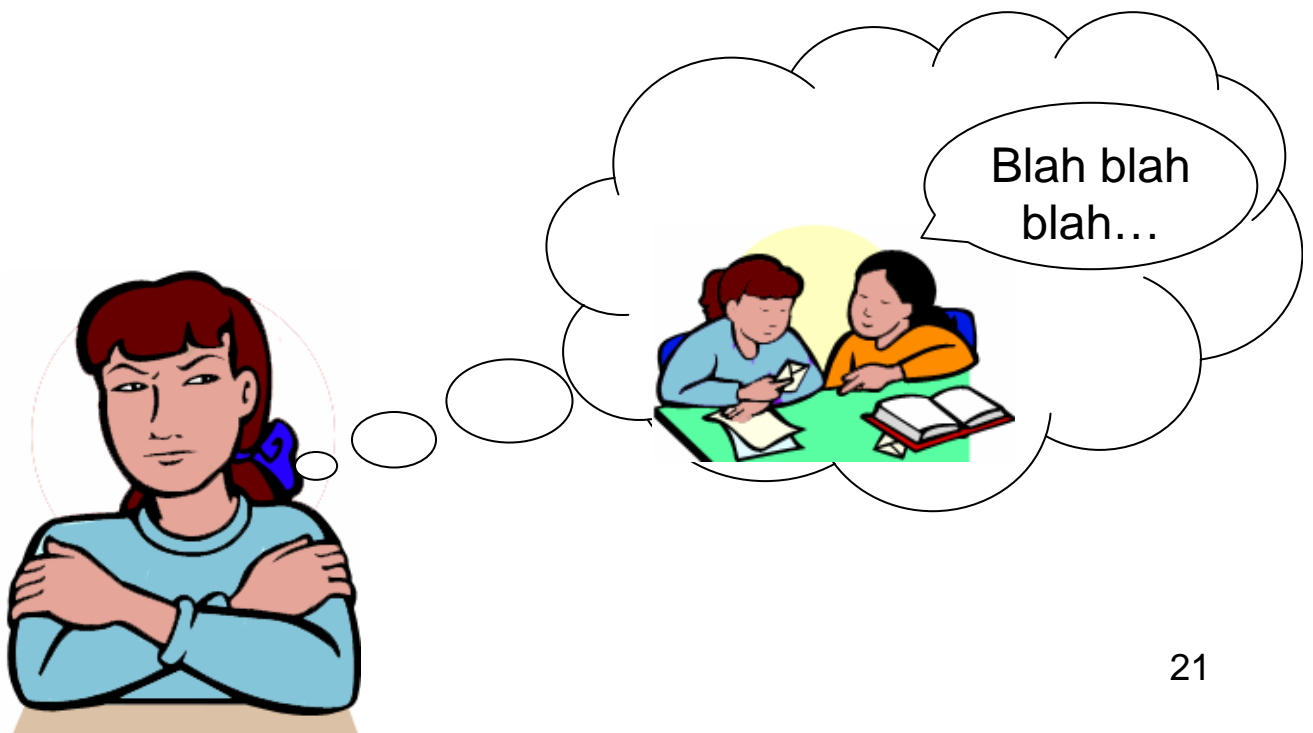
Because it is hard to listen when it is noisy, children may try to talk at school when it's quiet so they can hear the reply of the person they are talking to. They may get into trouble for talking too much.



# Dominating talk



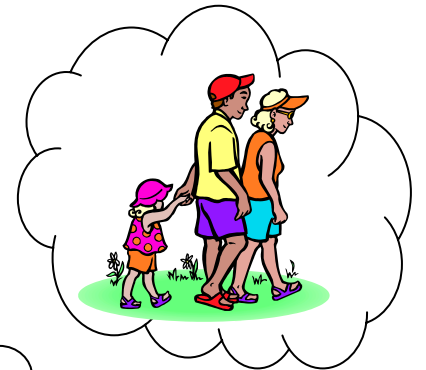
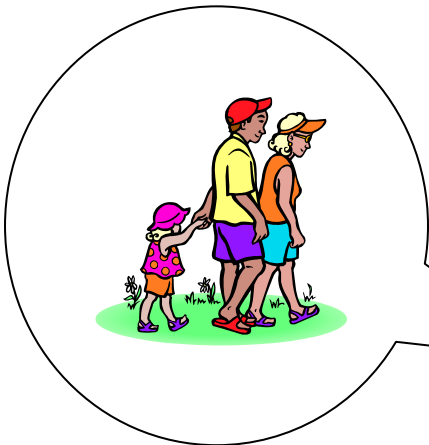
- One way of making sure you don't get shamed by not understanding what is said to you is by doing most of the talking. Other children, parents and teachers can get annoyed at being ignored or not getting a chance to talk.



# Knowing what will happen



- Knowing what is going to happen reduces listening demands. Children with CHL may often want to know ‘what is going to happen?’



# Bossing others



- One way of knowing what will happen is to tell others what to do. Some children with listening problems try to boss other children, and even adults, to do what they want. With a few children this bossing may sometimes end up in bullying.



# Being quiet and shy



- Some children with listening problems are very quiet and shy, especially girls. These children often worry about being with new people or being in new situations.



# Worrying



- Children with CHL may worry a lot about not being able to do things or getting things wrong. They may try very hard to do the right thing. They also may be vulnerable to being picked on by others.



# Angels at school, tantrums at home

- Some children may work so hard listening at childcare and school that they arrive home exhausted and emotional. As a result they may have tantrums or need to rest from listening when they get home.



# The unfamiliar is hard



- Children may worry about doing unfamiliar things or meeting new people. They may rely on family members and may be clingy in these situations.



# Sport



- Children may have problems playing team sports because it is hard to hear other players or the coach.



# Loud noises



- As well as having trouble hearing, loud noises may be painful.



# More problems at school than home



- Children may have more problems at school because it is often noisy at school.
- There are there are more demands to learn by listening.



# Parental experiences



- Parents often feel inadequate because their children are difficult to manage and relate to.
- They may be criticized in social situations because of their children's behaviour.





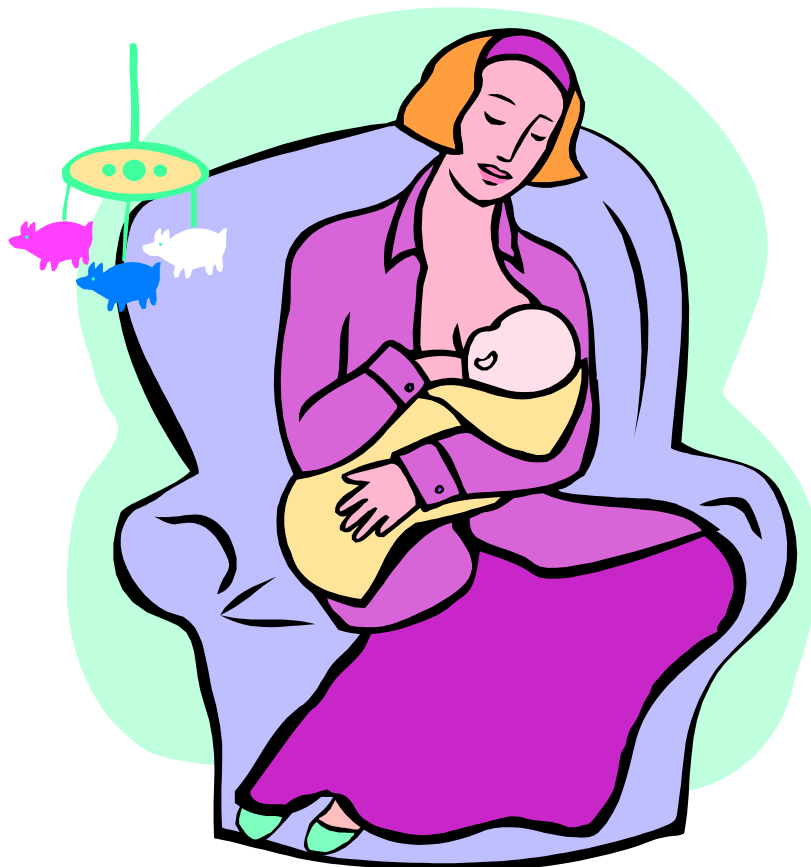
# What Can Families do to Help with Middle Ear



# Breast feeding



- Helps protect babies against ear infections



# Keep away from smoke



# Washing



- Get kids to wash their hands and face often so they don't spread germs.



# Get medical help

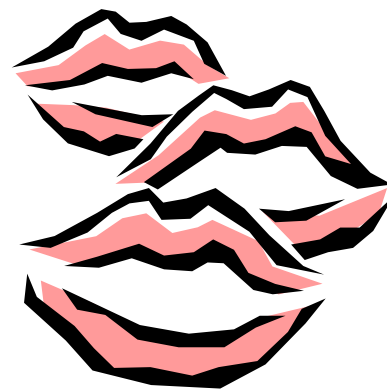


- See your GP





# How Families Can Help Communication



# When talking



- Get close
- Make sure child is looking at you and can see your face



# Showing



- Show as well as talking. What children see can help them understand what is said



# Watching others



Watching is one way to cope even though it is hard to listen. It is often easier to learn through 'hands on' activities than when there is too much talk



# Noise



- Be aware that background noise will make it even harder to understand what is being said.



# Repeat



- Say important things two or three times. Check understanding by asking children to say what they have understood back to you.



# Let them know



- Let them know what is going to happen so they know what to expect and don't have to listen as hard.



# Build confidence



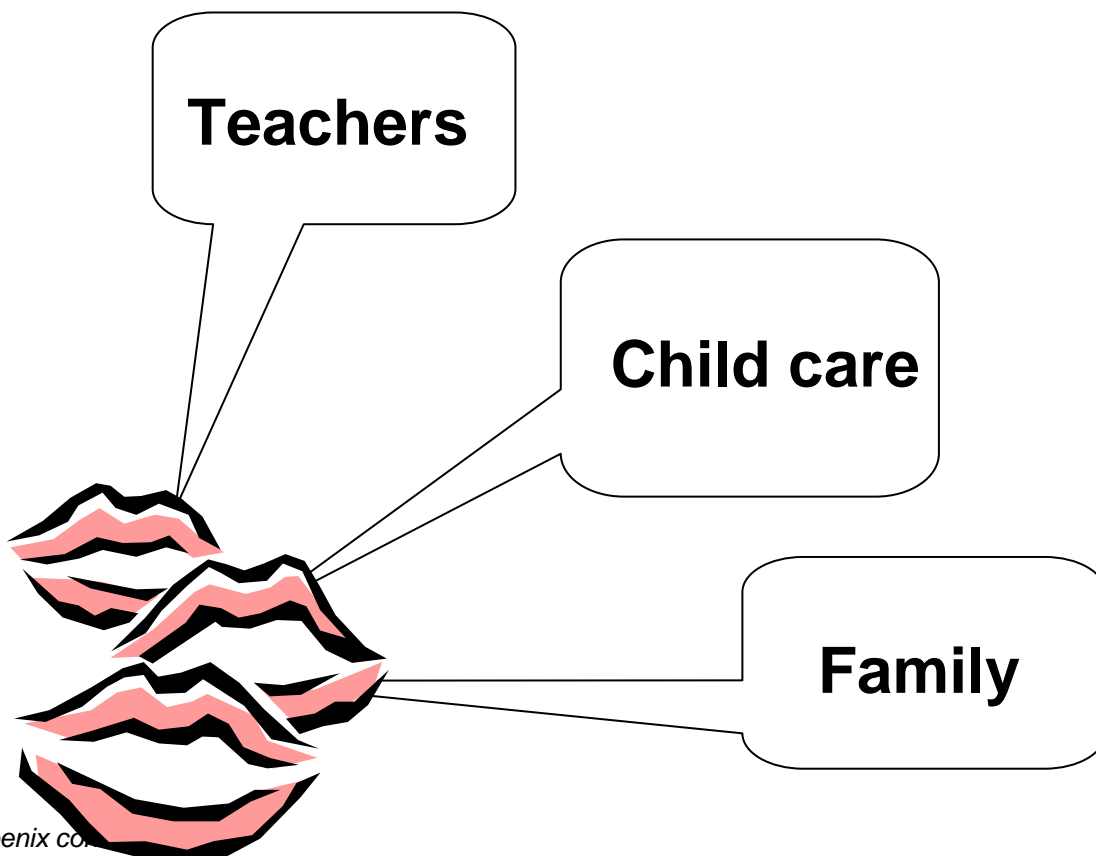
- Focus on what children do well and help them feel good about it. Help children understand they are not 'dumb' but may they have more trouble listening than others.



# Talk to people about what is in this book



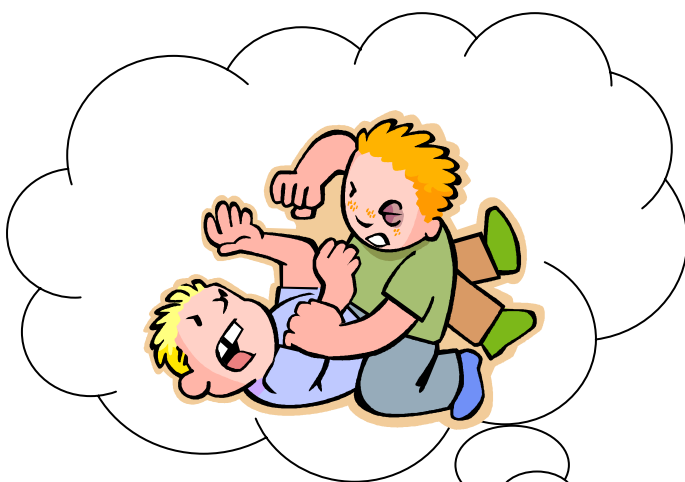
- Talk with other people in your family.
- Talk with friends and people who look after your child.
- Talk to teachers.



# Talk to teachers



- Let teachers know about Conductive Hearing Loss.
- Teachers can learn more about hearing problems at [www.eartroubles.com](http://www.eartroubles.com) .



Conductive  
Hearing Loss



# Thanks



- To the following people and organizations that helped putting together this book.
- Kathy Currie
- Denyse Bainbridge

# More information



- For more information on listening problems go to [www.eartroubles.com](http://www.eartroubles.com)
- For information on communications training contact Damien Howard on
- 08 89484444 or **damien@phoenixconsulting.com.au**



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