

School Sport and Conductive Hearing Loss

Sport is an area that Aboriginal children often excel in at school. Participation helps to motivate children to attend school and helps foster positive self esteem. Sport contributes to Aboriginal children valuing themselves positively more than any other school activity (Kicket-Tucker 1999).



Conductive hearing loss that is experienced by so many Aboriginal people can affect children's participation in sport. Conductive hearing loss results from middle ear disease which affects many children during childhood, but is endemic among Aboriginal children. On average Aboriginal children spend 2.6 years during childhood with hearing loss compared with an average of 3 months for non Aboriginal children in Australia.

In one Darwin school where children's hearing was being tested, teachers were asked to rate student's sporting abilities. Forty five percent of the Aboriginal children in the school had a current hearing loss, a not uncommon situation. Those Aboriginal children with a current conductive hearing loss were half as likely to be judged as having above average sporting abilities as were Aboriginal children without a hearing loss.

- Middle ear disease and hearing loss can affect sporting performance in a number of ways.
- Children may feel unwell because of the infection.
- They may be clumsy because the middle ear is important for balance.
- Hearing loss may affect communication during training and while playing sport.

While children with hearing loss have more difficulties in school sport, they often have even more in coping with the academic and social demands of school. Sport often provides the best opportunity to succeed and feel positive about themselves. Helping them fulfill their sporting potential can help their academic and social functioning off the sports field.

What to do

Some suggestions on what to do are outlined below. For information on detailed training programs on supporting children with conductive hearing loss visit www.eartroubles.com

Training strategies

- It is important to train through 'showing' as much as possible.
 - Create opportunities for children to observe others before trying a task themselves.
 - Encourage the use of signals with, or instead of verbal communication.
 - Establish routines and be careful about creating too much change
 - Use buddy support systems.
- ### Verbal Communication
- When giving verbal instructions speak slowly and clearly.
 - Make sure you get the attention of

- children before trying to speak.
- Try to limit background noise when giving verbal instruction.
- Repeat important information
- Don't give too much information at once

Managing Behaviour

- Children with hearing loss often
- Have low self confidence and feel they are 'dumb'.
 - Are disruptive when unable to cope with verbal communication.
 - Use avoidance strategies when unsure of what to do or fear they may fail.
 - May develop a 'teasing' social style that makes them unpopular with peers.
 - Are often sensitive to anything that makes them feel shamed or socially excluded.

Knowing who has a hearing loss

A simple game 'Blind Man's Simon Says' can help identify who has a current hearing loss. You can get more information on it at www.eartroubles.com

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