



# Know the Red Flags and Risk Factors

## RED FLAGS: VISION

**Be on the alert for these red flags that could be a sign or symptom of vision loss in a child:**

- No eye contact by 3 months
- Does not fix on or follow an object by 3 months
- Does not accurately reach for objects by 6 months
- Frequent tears when not crying
- Closes or covers one eye
- Squints
- Complains that things seem blurry or hard to see
- Holds objects close to face to see them or holds them unusually far away
- Has trouble reading
- Blinks more often than typical
- Tilts or turns head to use one eye
- Frequently runs into things
- Stands unusually close to TV and other screens
- Experiences great discomfort from bright lights
- Eyes appear crossed or do not move together
- Eyes are frequently red-rimmed, watery, or crusted
- Eyelids droop to cover pupils
- Eyes shake or move constantly
- Pupils are an unusual shape
- Pupils are white or cloudy
- Pupils are red or violet

For more information, visit the CDC's "[Facts About Vision Loss in Children](#)" and the [American Optometric Association](#).

## RED FLAGS: HEARING

**Be on the alert for these red flags that could be a sign or symptom of a child's hearing loss:**

### For Babies

- After 6 months, does not turn toward the source of a sound
- By 1 year, does not say single words (e.g., “dada” or “mama”)
- Does not turn head toward you when you call their name
- Does not startle at loud noises
- Seems to hear some sounds but not others
- Has delayed typical milestones in how a baby plays, learns, communicates, and acts (for details, see the CDC's "[Developmental Milestones](#)")

### For Children

- Speech is delayed
- Speech is not clear
- Does not follow directions (although the child might not be paying attention, this could indicate hearing loss)
- Often says, “Huh?”
- Turns the volume up excessively high on devices like the TV
- Has delayed typical milestones for how a child plays, learns, communicates, and acts (for details, see the CDC's "[Developmental Milestones](#)")

For more information on identifying and diagnosing hearing loss, visit the CDC's [Hearing Loss in Children](#) website.

## RISK FACTORS: VISION

- Exposure to alcohol or drugs before birth
- Premature and received oxygen at birth
- Birth weight less than 3.3 pounds
- Had meningitis or encephalitis
- Mother had infection during pregnancy (e.g., toxoplasmosis, rubella, CMV, syphilis, herpes)
- Family history of vision loss (retinitis pigmentosa)
- Neurological problems (e.g., seizures)

- Other medical concerns (e.g., hearing loss, cerebral palsy)
- Family member is concerned about the child's vision

## **RISK FACTORS: HEARING**

- In nursery intensive care unit for 3 or more days, or was given oxygen for 10 or more days
- Unusual ear, head, or neck formation (e.g., cleft lip or palate, Down syndrome)
- Birth weight less than 3.3 pounds
- Severe jaundice and an exchange blood transfusion performed or recommended
- Mother had infection during pregnancy (e.g., toxoplasmosis, rubella, CMV, syphilis, herpes)
- Injury or trauma to the head
- Childhood infectious disease (e.g., meningitis, chicken pox)
- Family history of hearing loss
- Family member is concerned about the child's hearing, speech, language, and/or development delay

## **RISK FACTORS: DEAFBLINDNESS**

- Complications associated with prematurity
- Hereditary syndromes/disorders
  - CHARGE syndrome
  - Usher syndrome
  - Down syndrome
- Prenatal/congenital complications
  - Maternal infections such as cytomegalovirus (CMV)
  - Hydrocephalus
  - Microcephaly
  - Prenatal exposure to drugs/alcohol
- Postnatal/non-congenital
  - Asphyxia
  - Neurological injuries/conditions
  - Severe head injury

- Meningitis
- Multiple disabilities
- Family history of vision and/or hearing loss

## References

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**National Center on Deaf-Blindness, January 2022**

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The contents of this publication were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H326T180026. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Susan Weigert.

