

Your baby has hearing loss:
Should you wait for gene or cell therapy?

The short answer

For most babies with severe to profound hearing loss, **we do not recommend delaying proven hearing support** while waiting for a possible future treatment.

COCHLEAR IMPLANT	GENE THERAPY	CELL THERAPY
Available now. It bypasses damaged cells and sends sound information to the hearing nerve. Outcomes are well established.	Aims to correct one particular gene. It may help only selected children with a matching genetic diagnosis. Most treatments are still new or being studied.	Aims to replace damaged cells in the inner ear. It may eventually help more causes of hearing loss, but it is not yet routine treatment.

Why timing matters

- ✓ Babies learn spoken language by getting clear access to sound early.
- ✓ If a cochlear implant is recommended, earlier implantation usually gives the developing brain a better opportunity to learn from sound.
- ✓ Waiting for a treatment that is not yet available may mean losing valuable learning time.

What about keeping one ear unimplanted for the future?

Using two ears can help hearing in noise, finding where sounds come from and make listening easier. There is currently no evidence that having implants in both ears automatically rules out every future treatment. Ask your implant team about your child's individual situation.

What to do next

1. **Keep using the hearing support recommended now:** This may include hearing aids, communication support and assessment for cochlear implants.
2. **Ask about genetic testing:** This may identify the cause of hearing loss and show whether a specific trial or treatment could be relevant.
3. **Ask questions early:** Discuss both ears, timing, communication choices and any research you have heard about with your child's clinical team.

Hope for the future, without delaying help today

Gene and cell therapies are exciting. For most families, they should be seen as possible future options, not a reason to postpone treatment that can help a baby's development now.

Important: This is general information, not individual medical advice. Your child's audiology, ENT and cochlear implant teams can explain what is right for your child.

Summary adapted from "Implant now, or wait?" by Douglas Hartley and Helen Cullington 2026