# What is hearing loss?

There are three types of hearing loss:

1. **Conductive Hearing Loss**: A conductive hearing loss means something is wrong with the outer ear or the middle ear. Some people are born without the pinna (the part of the outer ear that we can see) to catch sound. Others have a blockage of wax in their ear canal or fluid behind their eardrum.
2. **Sensorineural Hearing Loss**: A sensorineural hearing loss is caused by a problem in the inner ear. It is also called nerve loss because the nerve endings in the inner ear are damaged. Some people are born with a nerve loss. Some other causes of nerve loss are ageing, noise exposure, and ototoxity (drugs which damage the ear's nerve endings).
3. **Mixed Hearing Loss**: Some people have both a sensorineural loss and a conductive loss. This is called a mixed hearing loss. A mixed loss means there is damage to the inner ear and to the middle or outer ear.

## Is all hearing loss alike?

No, there are varying degrees of hearing loss:

* **Mild**: People with a mild hearing loss cannot hear soft sounds. Sometimes they have to ask other people to repeat what they've said. It is hard for them to hear in noisy places.
* **Moderate**: A moderate hearing loss means that sounds must be fairly loud before a person can hear them. People with a moderate loss have trouble hearing others talk unless they talk loudly. Speech may not sound clear to them.
* **Severe**: People with a severe hearing loss can hear only very loud sounds. They cannot hear others talk. Many speech sounds are not clear to them. People with a severe loss hear vowels better than consonants.
* **Profound**: Even very loud sounds are not heard by people with a profound hearing loss. They cannot hear speech even if someone shouts. Low sounds, such as vowels, may be the only sounds they can hear. People with a profound loss may hear sounds only by feeling them through the body.