

# MICROTIA

March of Dimes • University of South Florida • Florida Department of Health

## Welcoming your new baby into your family.

Your baby was born with a condition known as microtia. We know this is not easy for you and you may not know how to feel. That's okay. Parents of children with this condition often feel shock, denial, grief, and even anger. It is all right to feel this way and no one will blame you. It will get better. You are not alone. Soon you will find lots of people and programs to help you. You may want to join a support group. Get to know your baby. Enjoy your baby.

## What is Microtia?

- Microtia (my-kro-shuh) is a problem in the way the ear forms. This means the ear or the inside of the ear is not completely formed. Parts of the ear may also be missing.
- Microtia usually affects one ear but sometimes both ears are affected.
- Sometimes microtia occurs by itself and other times with birth defects in other body parts.
- At times there is a bump of skin where the ear would normally be found. Other times, the lower part of the ear is formed but the upper part of the ear is missing. In the most serious cases, the whole ear is missing. This is called **anotia** (ah-no-shuh).
- It happens in the first few weeks of pregnancy before many women know they are pregnant.

## Why did this happen?

- No one knows why microtia occurs.
- Sometimes microtia runs in families. This means that a baby with microtia may have someone in the family with microtia.
- You did not do anything wrong during pregnancy to cause this to happen.

## Can our baby hear out of that ear?

- Children with microtia tend to have problems inside of the ear. This means they may have problems hearing from the affected ear.
- The doctor will use tests to find out if your baby has a hearing problem.
- If there is a problem, your child may need a hearing aid before he/she is six months old.

## How will this affect my baby?

- It is common for babies with microtia to have some or all of these problems:
  - Problems with hearing
  - Problems with balance
  - Can not tell where a sound or someone calling their name is without being able to see them
- It is important to treat ear infections in the other ear (not affected). Having too many ear infections may affect hearing.
- This does not mean that your baby will have all of these problems.

## Will my baby need surgery?

- To make the ear look more like a normal ear, your baby may need surgery or he or she may wear a prosthesis (pros-thee-sis). A prosthesis is an artificial (fake) ear that looks like a real ear.
- You can talk to your baby's doctor about which type of surgery is best for your child.
- Surgery usually begins around the time your child will begin school. Your baby's doctor will tell you the best time to begin surgery.
- It usually takes about 3 to 4 separate surgeries.

## If we have more children, will they have the same problem?

If you have a baby with microtia, your chance of having another baby with the condition is very low.

## Where can I go for help?

- Your doctor will refer you to a team of health experts, called a Craniofacial (say: kray-nee-o-fay-shel) Team. This team will make a plan to meet all of your baby's needs.
- If your baby has other problems, he or she should also be seen by a geneticist to identify whether he or she has a syndrome (a collection of problems that make up a disease). A geneticist is a doctor who is an expert in diseases that run in families (hereditary).

## Other Resources

- Children's Medical Services (CMS): call your local county health department for a CMS clinic in your area or visit: [www.cms-kids.com](http://www.cms-kids.com)
- Faces: The National Craniofacial Association: 1-800-332-2373 for more information, resources and financial assistance for traveling expenses to a treatment center.
- Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services: 1-800-654-4440.  
They will refer you to your local Early Steps Program and other programs.
- Florida Family Support Network to find Craniofacial teams, resources, genetic counselors: 1-800-726-2029 or visit: [www.floridacleft.org](http://www.floridacleft.org)
- March of Dimes: visit [marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com)
- MUMS National Parent to Parent Organization: 1-877-336-5333 (toll free) to get in touch with parents in your area whose children also have microtia.

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