

What is a common cavity?

The inner ear contains structures for hearing (the cochlea) and balance (the vestibule and semicircular canals).

- The **cochlea** is a part of your inner ear that sends hearing information to your auditory (hearing) nerve and up to your brain. The cochlea is shaped like a snail's shell.
- The **vestibule** and **semicircular canals** in your inner ear send signals to the brain to keep you balanced.

A **common cavity** is when the cochlea and vestibule form a single round chamber instead of the normal snail shell shape, which causes profound hearing loss (no awareness of sound) and balance issues.

How is a common cavity diagnosed?

A common cavity is diagnosed by a medical professional, usually an **otolaryngologist** (an ear, nose, and throat doctor). They will use imaging tests, such as an MRI and CT scan, to look at the structures of your ear.

- An **audiologist** (a doctor specializing in diagnosing and treating hearing loss) will complete a hearing test to understand how well you can hear and how much hearing loss you may have.
- A common cavity is a type of **congenital** (present at birth) cause of hearing loss. It may be due to a genetic mutation, so genetic testing may be helpful in understanding its cause.

How is a common cavity treated?

- People with a common cavity may be able to get a cochlear implant. However, cochlear implants usually don't work as well for people with a common cavity compared to people with normal ear structures. It may work better for these patients to use a combination of speech (talking) and sign language for communication.
- Instead of a cochlear implant, an **auditory brainstem implant (ABI)** may help your hearing by skipping your cochlea and cochlear nerve and sending sound signals directly to your brain. Talk with your doctor if you are interested in more information about ABIs.

Where can I find more information and resources about hearing loss?

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

- List of hearing loss organizations:
www.ASHA.org/public/hearing/hearing-loss-organizations-and-associations



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