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## Hyperacusis in children: A clinical classification

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**H**yperacusis is a common complaint in children. While for most children, this is a transient problem with little impact on a child's day to day activities, for some it can cause significant distress, leading to avoidance of activities and marked restrictions of family life. Using a cross sectional observation approach, the clinical profile of children reporting troublesome hyperacusis in a pediatric audiology setting was explored. The ages of the children ranged between 1 and 15 years with the commonest age at presentation being 3-4 years (n=33, 54%). The male (n=38) to female (n=23) ratio was 1.65 to 1 (p=0.07). Hearing was normal in majority (66%) of the children. There was an age difference in the clinical features of children reporting troublesome hyperacusis. An active middle ear problem was noted in 48% with glue ear (otitis media with effusion, OME) being the commonest condition. Ear problems were more prevalent in the younger children. Neurodevelopmental conditions were seen in 46% of children and more prevalent in the older children. 18% had autistic spectrum disorder. In 23%, both middle ear problems and neurodevelopmental conditions were found. We propose a classification to explain the different clinical profiles based on possible mechanisms for the hyperacusis in children. The classification is as follows: Immature but normally developing auditory system; Temporary auditory deprivation; Disorder within the auditory system; Disorder of sensory processing. An awareness of different presentations and medical conditions combined with the use of this classification may help in understanding the basis for hyperacusis in a child and aid discussion of prognosis and development of an appropriate management plan.

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