

Protecting Speech, Language & Hearing

Although state-of-the-art treatment is available for many communication challenges, the best medicine is prevention. Anyone at any age can develop a communication problem as a result of illness or injury. People can reduce their risk of certain speech, language and hearing problems by taking some simple and prudent measures throughout their lives.

- It seems obvious, but many birth defects, which often lead to communication problems and worse, could be prevented with proper prenatal care.
- New Jersey now mandates hearing screenings at birth or during the first month of life. If a problem is detected, appropriate treatment should be arranged. If no problem is perceived, caregivers should still be watchful that hearing continues to be normal.
- Parents and caregivers also should be vigilant about preventing and treating common childhood ear infections, which can lead to hearing loss and delays in language development if the infections become chronic.
- Parents and caregivers should talk with children and read to them as much as possible from birth through childhood. This will help children develop a solid foundation of communication skills, which will improve their ability to develop language, think, learn, read and succeed.
- Use of child safety seats, seat belts, bike helmets and other safety devices can help reduce brain injuries at all ages, which can lead to communication problems.
- As a group, teenagers sustain the majority of traumatic brain injuries. They need to be encouraged to engage in safe behavior such as practicing proper driving techniques.
- At any age, people can reduce their exposure to harmful noise by using earplugs while at an industrial workplace, attending a concert or using loud equipment such as lawn mowers, food processors, hair dryers, etc.
- Everyone throughout their lives should try to maintain a healthy lifestyle and consult with medical professionals routinely to prevent changes in their health. This is especially true for seniors who are prone to strokes and heart attacks, which can lead to speech impairments and memory loss.