



New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association

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How Audiologists Help Children **Communicate Better**

Normal hearing ability is critical for babies, toddlers and young children as they learn to communicate. It is by listening to words and tones of voice that they first begin to process language and its meaning.

If their ability to hear is temporarily blocked or permanently damaged, children can experience short- and long-term communication problems that can range from mild to profound. Moreover, these problems can negatively impact their ability to speak, learn and think.

What causes childhood hearing problems?

Children can have temporary, prolonged or permanent hearing problems in one or both ears for a variety of reasons.

- Common childhood ailments such as ear infections, the build-up of fluid in the middle ear, colds or infections
- Problems during birth, genetics/heredity, injury, or exposure to loud noise

What are the signs of early hearing problems?

Children may:

- have trouble paying attention,
- not respond when spoken to,
- have a delayed response,
- say “huh?” often
- not follow directions well,
- turn up the volume on radios & TVs
- withdraw from other children,
- exhibit behavioral problems.

When should children be evaluated for hearing problems?

It is never too early to have hearing tested. New Jersey mandates that newborns be screened for hearing loss prior to leaving the hospital or within 30 days of birth. If hearing loss is suspected, an audiologist should conduct a full audiological evaluation. Pediatricians or other healthcare providers can arrange for this. Early detection is essential since early intervention can enable children to develop their auditory and speech-language skills normally.

What do Audiologists do?

Audiologists help people of all ages who have hearing problems. Licensed by the state of New Jersey, they are required to have a masters or doctoral degree, complete a full-time internship and pass a national competency examination.

Audiologists identify and assess the cause and extent of hearing damage. They prescribe individualized treatment, which might include rehabilitation, the use of hearing aids or other amplification devices, and counseling on how to prevent further hearing loss. If medical or surgical treatment might be needed, audiologists will refer patients to physicians for evaluation.

Sometimes individuals, particularly children, hear normally, but have trouble interpreting or understanding information. They might have a Central Auditory Processing (CAP) disorder. Audiologists along with other professionals can help these people improve their listening and learning ability.

Where can audiologists be found?

Audiologists work in a variety of settings including private practice, hospitals and university speech and hearing clinics. For a list of audiologists in New Jersey, visit the NJSHA web site at www.NJSHA.org.

What can be done when children have hearing problems?

The audiological evaluation is the foundation that helps direct treatment if hearing loss cannot be resolved with medicine and/or surgery.

Audiologists can recommend one or more of the following interventions:

- Hearing aids
- Other amplification devices
- Modification of behavior to prevent future hearing loss
- Counseling on ways to deal with communication situations at home and in school
- Classroom management strategies
- Evaluation by a speech-language specialist to determine the effect of the disorder on language abilities.

Early intervention for hearing loss will help children attain social, emotional and academic success.

Parents, Guardians & Educators Can Help Children Communicate Better

By contacting:

New Jersey
Speech-Language-Hearing Association
www.NJSHA.org

American Speech & Hearing Association
www.ASHA.org

What are the milestones for children who are developing auditory skills normally?

There are specific milestones that most children achieve at various age levels.

Newborns to 3-month-olds ~ respond to noise, smile when spoken to, make pleasure sounds such as cooing

4- to 6-month-olds ~ respond to tones of voice, listen to music, make babbling speech-like sounds, vocalize emotions, locate direction of noises with eyes

7-month- to 1-year-olds ~ listen when spoken to, recognize and speak a few words, turn and look in direction of sounds, enjoy games such as peek-a-boo, imitate speech sounds

1- to 2-year-olds ~ point to pictures in books, follow simple directions, listen to simple stories, songs & rhymes, say more words every month, ask one- and two-word questions

2- to 3-year-olds ~ understand differences between up and down, go and stop, have words for almost everything, use two- and three-word sentences, use speech that can be understood by family

3- to 4-year-olds ~ hear when called from another room, understand “wh-” questions, speak easily, use speech that can be understood by most people

4- to 5-year-olds ~ pay attention to short stories and can answer story-related questions, hear and understand what is said at home and in school, speak clearly using detailed sentences with adult-like grammar

When children are not successfully developing auditory skills, they should be evaluated by an audiologist.