

WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH NETWORK

Parenting and Child Health

Parent Helpline 1300 364 100

Hearing and hearing loss

Hearing well is important to your child's development. If there are any difficulties hearing, finding them early is important. If children who are born with a hearing loss receive help by 6 months of age, they have a good chance of developing speech and language as well as children who hear normally. A baby or child is never too young to have a hearing test. Babies can be tested when they are less than one day old. Have a look at the topic Your baby's newborn hearing screening for more information about this test.

ALERT!

If a child or adult has a hearing loss that comes on suddenly, he should be seen urgently by a doctor.

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Hearing milestones

Here are some of the milestones that you can check whether your baby reacts normally to sounds.

Shortly after birth:

A baby can be startled by a sudden noise such as a hand clap or door slamming, and may blink or open their eyes widely or stiffen their arms and legs in response to loud sounds.

By 1 month:

Your baby will begin noticing sudden long sounds, like the noise of a vacuum cleaner. They listen to these sounds when they begin, and notice when they stop.

By 4 months:

Your baby quiets or smiles at the sound of a voice, even when they cannot see you. A baby may turn their head or eyes towards you if you speak to them from the side.

By 7 months:

Your baby should turn immediately to your voice across the room, or to very quiet noises made on each side of them, unless they are too busy with other things.

By 9 months:

A baby listens to familiar everyday sounds, and looks in response to very quiet sounds made out of sight, both to the side or above and below them. Your baby should also show pleasure in babbling loudly and tunelessly.

By 12 months:

Your baby should show some response to their own name and other familiar words, and may also respond when you say 'no', or 'bye-bye', even when they cannot see you.

Hearing loss should be considered in babies who do not do these things.

If you are not sure that your baby is hearing well, have your baby's hearing tested by a qualified audiologist

Older Children:

Older children who are not hearing well may not respond to speech or noises consistently, may appear to be inattentive or may often ask you to repeat what you have said. They may prefer to have the television louder and may show difficulty hearing or understanding you when you are some distance away, or there is a lot of other noise around.

Children who do not hear well may start talking later than other children, use incorrect words or sounds, or have unclear speech. If the child does not hear most of what is said, they will not learn the correct way to say words and sentences. Most children with delayed or unclear speech have normal hearing, but assessing their hearing is an important part of working out why a child's language skills are delayed.

Hearing loss may affect a child's learning, behaviour and their social development if it is left undetected and unmanaged. Most children with school or behaviour problems have normal hearing, but an assessment of their hearing can help to determine if the hearing loss is causing or aggravating their behaviour.

***From NESD Head Start: If your child has failed the Head Start hearing screening please schedule an appointment with your child's medical provider and inform them that your child failed this screening. Your medical provider will refer your child to an ENT specialist or Audiologist if needed.**