



What Parents Need to Know about Hearing Screening for Young Children



Every parent should have their baby's hearing checked at birth and regularly during early childhood. We can't see a hearing loss and young children can't tell us if they are hearing all the important sounds in the world around them.

- ❖ A child with a severe hearing loss may hear only very loud noises. If not identified early, the inability to hear spoken language can be devastating to a child's development.
- ❖ A child with limited hearing may turn toward a parent's voice, but miss many words and speech sounds. An unidentified mild hearing loss, or a loss in one ear, can make it difficult for a child to follow instructions and learn.

Fortunately, parents and professionals can work together to find and help the children who need it. The first simple step is for parents, caregivers, teachers and health care providers to pay close attention to a child's language development and responses to sound. If there are any concerns, the child should be evaluated by a pediatric audiologist (hearing specialist). In addition, all young children should have the benefit of reliable hearing screening:



- ❖ Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) screening can be done with a child of any age while asleep or awake. A small probe, like an earbud, is placed in the ear. This sends a series of soft clicks or tones into the ear and also collects the inner ear's response through a tiny microphone.

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- ❖ Pure Tone Screening can be used with many children over 3 years of age. Headphones are placed over the child's ears and the child is asked to respond each time a sound is heard.

These screening methods can help us to identify children who need further evaluation. When a child doesn't pass, a visit to a health care provider can often resolve temporary problems such as a wax blockage in the ear canal or a middle ear infection. It is important to know, though, that most health care providers do not conduct hearing screenings. Make sure another screening is done after common problems have been resolved. If a child still does not pass, referral to a pediatric audiologist is essential. If a child has a permanent hearing loss, effective intervention should be started immediately.



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Hearing screening is also a great reminder that **children learn through communication!** The more that parents talk and prompt a child to respond, the more the child will learn. So, take out your earbuds, put down your phone, pick up your child and communicate! Learn more at:

<http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/parents/talk.html>