



THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD HEARING TESTING

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Most parents are familiar with the need to screen their newborn's hearing in the hospital, but after being given the green light, they lack awareness about the importance of testing their children as they grow.

Many families think of hearing loss in black and white terms, believing one has either normal hearing or deafness. Actually, hearing loss is much more nuanced. About 1 in 1,000 babies are born with profound deafness, and another 5 in 1,000 are born with significant hearing loss. Other types of childhood hearing loss are not present at birth, but can manifest later due to ear infections, trauma, syndromes, genetic causes or damaging noise levels. According to The American Speech–Language–Hearing Association, children with hearing loss will find it much more difficult than children who have normal hearing to learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expressions and other aspects of verbal communication.

According to the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, all infants and young children should be monitored for developmental auditory behaviors and speech and language development. Those who demonstrate delayed development, regardless of newborn screening outcome, should receive an auditory evaluation to rule out hearing loss. Research shows that untreated hearing loss can have devastating consequences on learning speech and language. For the school-age child, untreated hearing loss is linked to lower outcomes and puts a child at higher risk of failing one or more grades.

EARLY DETECTION IS THE KEY

The good news is that early detection and treatment really works! Children who receive appropriate hearing intervention, such as hearing aids, assistive technology, therapy and/or school accommodations can perform on par with normal-hearing peers.

For school-age children in California, public schools provide hearing screenings in Kindergarten or 1st, 2nd, 5th, 8th and 10th grades, as well as when a child first enters the California public school system or a teacher or staff member is concerned and refers the child for testing.

If your child fails a hearing screening at school or in the pediatrician's office, it's important to schedule an auditory evaluation with an audiologist. Only an audiologist can determine the type and severity of a hearing loss.

WHAT ABOUT EAR INFECTIONS?

Another situation common to parents of toddlers is ear infections. While most isolated incidents of ear infections clear up relatively quickly on their own or with simple antibiotic treatment from a physician, frequent or chronic ear infections warrant hearing testing to determine if the infection is causing hearing loss. This type of frequent/intermittent or chronic hearing loss can cause speech and language delays. If your child is under the care of an otolaryngologist, or ENT physician, and ear tubes are recommended, a referral should be made to an audiologist for pre- and post-operative testing.

At Conejo Hearing Center, we specialize in age-appropriate testing methods for pediatrics and can test children 3 years old and up. As the mother of young children, I am passionate about hearing devices and assistive technology to maximize hearing potential for every child and adult.

To make an appointment for a hearing test screening, contact Conejo Hearing Center at 818.991.3800. Visit them at Village Green Office Park, 5655 Lindero Canyon Rd #506, in Westlake Village, CA 91362, or online at ConejoHearingCenter.com.