

Parenting in Focus: A child's hearing checklist

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One of the ways a parent can tell if their child is developing normally is to understand exactly what is normal. You can do this with hearing problems also by having a checklist of what is developmentally normal for specific ages. These specific guidelines are based on the U.S. National Library of Medicine (medlineplus.gov).

If your child is not reaching what is generally expected for his age, you perhaps should arrange for your child's hearing to be tested. When hearing problems are detected early you can prevent your child from falling behind.

Look for the following clues to assess your child's hearing. Symptoms of hearing loss in a baby include:

- Not jumping or being startled in reaction to loud noises
- Not reacting to a parent's voice by 3 months of age
- Not turning his or her eyes or head toward a sound by 6 months of age
- Not imitating sounds or saying a few simple words by 12 months of age

Symptoms of hearing loss in a toddler include:

- Delayed speech or speech that is hard to understand; most young children can say a few words, like "mama" or "dada," by 15 months of age
- Not responding when called by name
- Not paying attention
- Uses many words, may not be pronounced perfectly but the meaning is clear
- Follows simple commands without visual cues, likes being read to and can point to pictures when asked
- Uses variety of everyday words heard at home, refers to self by name
- Puts words together to convey messages (milk all gone)
- Recites or sings short rhymes or songs and enjoys listening to music

Symptoms of hearing loss in older children and teens include:

- Trouble understanding what other people are saying, especially in a noisy environment
- Trouble hearing high-pitched sounds
- Needing to turn up the volume on the TV or music player
- A ringing sound in the ears

It is reassuring to have some guidelines to look for normal development. Your child is changing rapidly and you are in charge of knowing when he needs extra help.

Even doctor's need to rely on parents being the first in a child's life to pick up on issues that should be checked out.

Sources to help parents assess and treat a child with hearing loss are easily found on the internet. Do not ignore issues that concern you. Check them out.

Parents are a critical ingredient in keeping their children healthy.

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