

Healthy Hearing

Healthy hearing is critical to a child's speech and language development, communication, learning, and social development. Children who do not hear well are at an increased risk of becoming struggling readers. An estimated 10-15% of all school-aged children have some type of hearing loss. Some of these children are born with a hearing problem (which can get progressively worse), but healthy young children can also develop hearing loss as a result of:

- frequent ear infections
- infectious diseases like measles, chicken pox, meningitis, or flu
- head injury
- exposure to loud noise or music

Many school-aged children with acquired hearing loss are not diagnosed properly or early enough. Here are some common signs that your child may have developed a hearing problem:

- You have to raise your voice consistently to get your child's attention
- Your child complains of ear pain or is pulling on his ear
- Your child watches your face carefully when you are talking and turns his head so that one ear is facing the direction of your voice
- Your child frequently asks for things to be repeated
- Your child talks in an unusually soft or loud voice
- Your child turns up the television or CD player louder than usual
- Your child confuses sounds that are alike, and is having problems with spelling and phonics
- Your child seems inattentive at home or at school, and may say he doesn't like school

If you or your child's teacher suspects that your child has a hearing problem, first visit your pediatrician for a check up. An ear infection requires immediate treatment.

Have your child's hearing evaluated by a certified audiologist, who will determine the severity of the hearing loss.

If your child acquires a long-term or permanent hearing loss, you should seek out a certified speech-language pathologist who will measure your child's speech and language skills and help develop special remedial programs, if needed.

For help in finding a certified audiologist or speech-language pathologist, visit the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's online directory: <http://www.asha.org/findpro/>

ASHA also has a great website ("Listen to Your Buds") that teaches children to protect their hearing through safe use of portable audio players: <http://www.listentoyourbuds.org>

**For information on speech, language, and hearing, visit:
www.ReadingRockets.org/article/c522**

