

Do You Hear What I Hear?



Young children use all their senses—especially hearing—to explore their world. Temporary or permanent hearing loss may be present at birth or may follow frequent ear infections, injuries, or disease. Hearing loss can slow language development and lead to other learning problems. In Illinois, the law requires all hospitals to test hearing in newborns. All preschools and licensed child care centers are required to screen children 3 years old or older every year. Parents and teachers also play an important role in identifying children who may need further screening.

What are the signs of normal hearing development?

- By 3 months, an infant responds to a parent's voice by becoming more alert. A 6-month-old turns toward a sound and babbles in a series of sounds.
- By 12 months, a baby begins to imitate sounds and may say a few words, such as “mama” or “bye.”
- Around 2 years, a toddler understands action words, such as *run*; follows simple spoken directions; and uses two- to three-word sentences.

Ask your health care provider for a hearing checklist or obtain free information by calling the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association at (800) 638-8255.

What are some common signs of hearing loss?

- A child with hearing loss may seem inattentive or resistant.
- He may misunderstand words or seem to hear some sounds but not others.
- She may not be interested in television or radio.
- He may not speak clearly or be difficult to understand.

What should I do if I suspect a child has hearing loss?

Ask your child's health care provider if screening by a trained professional might be needed or ask to speak to your local school district's hearing consultant.

How important is treatment?

Early treatment can make a lifelong difference. Research shows that children born with hearing loss usually can begin school with normal language and learning skills if appropriate care is begun by 6 months of age. Treatment can include finding the underlying cause; making environmental changes; and providing training, exercises, hearing aids, or surgery. Treat any hearing loss quickly to avoid hearing-related learning and social problems.

For related Web resources, see “Do You Hear What I Hear?” at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

The opinions, resources, and referrals provided in this Tip Sheet are intended for information purposes only and should not be considered or used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We advise parents to seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health care provider with questions regarding their child's health or medical conditions.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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