

Let's Talk About...

Hearing in babies

Hearing loss can be a hidden disability. Some babies are born with hearing loss. Other babies can be born with normal hearing and develop hearing loss later in childhood. You may not know your child has hearing loss until you notice they aren't talking normally (sometimes after 2 years old).

What happens if my baby has hearing loss?

About 1 in every 250 children has enough hearing loss to affect normal speech and language development. Hearing loss can also affect school performance and social skills. Research shows that finding and treating hearing loss before your baby is 6 months old can give them a better chance of developing speech and language normally. The sooner you find hearing loss, the sooner treatment can begin.

How is my baby tested for hearing problems?

Many states, including Utah, require all newborns to have a hearing screening. This helps children with hearing loss get early and more effective care. Your child's doctor or audiologist can answer any questions you have.

Along with a hearing screening, you should also watch your child's responses to sound and speech development at home. This helps you know if your child needs help.

How should my baby respond to sounds as they grow?

It is important to know what to expect with your baby's hearing as they grow. The following list can help you tell if your child is developing normal responses to sound:

Normal response to sound at 0–3 months old:

- Startled by sharp clap within 3–6 feet
- Can be awakened from sleep by sounds (without being touched)
- Cries at sudden, loud noises (door slamming or dog barking)
- Reassured by laughter and sounds of pleasure
- Calmed by voice, appear to listen
- May coo when someone talks to them
- Responds to your voice by making sounds
- Interested in contrasting sound (loud to soft or high to low)



Normal response to sound at 3–6 months old

- Knows mother’s or father’s voice
- Enjoys making noises (crying, lip noises, tongue clacking)
- Laughs, coos, and babbles for pleasure
- Begins to turn head toward sounds
- Responds to loving or angry tones of voice
- Begins to look for soft speech sounds
- May not be startled by sounds like at 0–3 months old

Normal response to sound at 6–9 months old

- Looks side to side to find where a sound is coming from (must be able to hear in both ears)
- Knows their own name when others say it
- Searches for sounds at eye level and downward
- Plays patty-cake and peek-a-boo
- Imitates simple sounds
- Understands simple words (no-no or uh-oh)
- Pays attention to music or singing
- Knows family members’ names even when a person isn’t in sight

Normal response to sound at 9–12 months old

- Searches for sources of sound (bell or squeak toy)
- Can find a sound coming from behind them
- Enjoys hearing new words
- Imitates sound of animals or objects (cows, dogs, or clocks)
- Uses first meaningful word
- Babbles sounds more like a conversation with some words you can recognize



- Points to or looks at a familiar object when asked
- Can wave “bye-bye” when asked to
- Understands simple questions (Where is mommy?)

What do I do if my child has hearing loss?

If you think your baby may have hearing loss, call their healthcare provider. Remember: Your child can be tested at any age. The earlier you find hearing loss, the sooner healthcare providers can begin treatments to improve language outcomes.

To schedule an appointment at any of Primary Children’s Hospital’s audiology centers, call 801.662.3277 (EARS).

- **Primary Children’s Main Campus (inpatient only)**
100 North Mario Capecchi Drive (first floor)
Salt Lake City, UT 84113
- **Primary Children’s Rehab Bountiful**
280 North Main Street
Bountiful, UT 84010
- **Primary Children’s Rehab Taylorsville**
3845 West 4700 South #102
Taylorsville, UT 84119
- **Primary Children’s Rehab Riverton**
3741 West 12600 South (third floor)
Riverton, UT 84065

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