

Let's Talk About...

Hearing in Babies

Hearing loss is a hidden disability. Often hearing loss is not discovered until someone notices that the child is not talking normally. This may be later than two years of age. About one in every 250 children has enough hearing loss so it is hard for them to develop normal speech and language. This can affect their success in school and their social skills. The sooner you find a hearing loss, the sooner treatment can begin. If a child begins treatment earlier in life, she will have fewer long-term effects.

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

Along with a hearing test, you should also watch your child's responses to sound and speech development at home. This helps you know if your child needs help. The following list can help tell if your child is developing normal responses to sound.

Normal 0–3 months response to sound:

- 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, dog barking)
- Reassured by laughter and sounds of pleasure
- Calmed by voice, appears to listen
- May "coo" when being talked to

- Responds to your voice by making sounds
- Interested in contrasting sound (for example loud-soft, high-low)

Changes include:

- Stops activity
- Awakes from sleep
- Speeds up or stops sucking
- Widens or blinks eyes
- Has a change in breathing or heart rate
- Raises eyebrows
- Makes faces

Normal 3–6 months response to sound:

- 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/angry tones of voice
- Begins to look for soft speech sounds
- May not be startled as in the earlier period

Normal 6–9 months response to sound:

- Looks side to side to find where a sound is coming from—your baby must be able to hear in both ears

- Knows own name when others say it
- Searches for sounds that are at eye level and downward
- Plays pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo
- Imitates simple sounds
- Understands simple words (no-no, oh-oh)
- Pays attention to music or singing
- Knows names of family members even when person is not in sight

Normal 9–12 months response to sound

- Searches for sources of sound (bell or squeak toy)
- Can find a sound coming from behind self
- Enjoys hearing new words
- Imitates sound of cows, clocks, dogs, etc.
- 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?”)

Hearing Loss

If you think your baby may have a hearing loss, remember she can be tested at any age. The earlier you find the hearing loss, the sooner she can train to hear normally. The goal of finding a hearing loss early is to help your child develop her best communication and social skills.

If you have any questions about your child’s hearing, please talk with her doctor or an audiologist at Primary Children’s Speech/Language and Hearing Centers. To schedule an appointment at any of our facilities, please call 801.662.4949

- **Primary Children’s Main Campus (Inpatient Only)**
100 North Mario Capecchi Drive, 4th Floor
Salt Lake City, UT 84113
- **Primary Children’s Hospital Rehab Bountiful**
280 North Main Street
Bountiful, UT 84010
- **Primary Children’s Hospital Rehab Taylorsville**
3845 West 4700 South #102
Taylorsville, UT 84119
- **Primary Children’s at Riverton**
3773 West 12600 South
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Also available in Spanish.