

# LANGUAGE MATTERS!

Early identification and intervention changes lives!

## What is language delay?

A 2-year-old who isn't speaking at least 50 words, or who can't put two words together has early language delay.



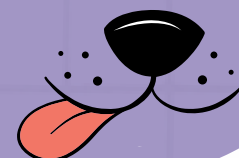
## Is it common?



- It is very common!
- 15-25% of 2 year olds meet this criteria.
- Half will catch up to the other children by the time they turn 3 years old, even without intervention.
- BUT 25-50% will continue to have language & learning problems.

## How can you help?

- Be aware.
- Try active listening techniques. (Resources available on our website.)
- Ask for help! If you think that your child may have a language delay, the child should be referred to an audiologist for a hearing test. You know your child better than anyone else!!!



## Hearing loss Effect on Understanding Speech

### Normal Hearing

On a rainy day, we can jump in puddles, splash around, and create the biggest, happiest mess together!

### Mild Hearing Loss

On a rainy day, we can jup in puddle\*, splah around, and create the bigget, happee\* mes toge\*her!

### Moderate Hearing Loss

A ay a, we ca jp i pdde\*, spa aound, ad ceate he bge, happee mes toghe!

### Severe Hearing Loss

*More distortion*

### Profound Hearing Loss

*More distortion and tinnitus  
(ringing in the ears)*

# HEARING MATTERS!

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## What is hearing loss?

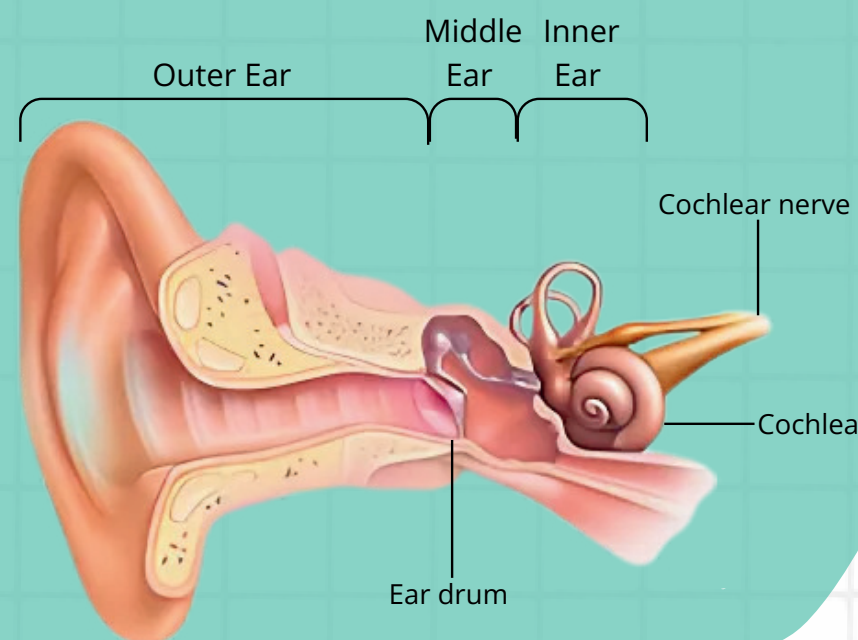
- Children with hearing loss are unable to hear sounds, words, or noises clearly.
- It may have been present from birth, or it may happen slowly or suddenly.
- There are different levels of hearing loss, ranging from mild to profound (completely deaf).

## Most common causes of hearing loss in children

- Glue ear (otitis media with effusion)
- Long-standing ear infections
- Wax impaction
- Damage or problems affecting the cochlea or nerve

## Why does it happen?

- For a sound to be heard, it needs to travel through the ear canal, to the ear drum, cochlea (sense organ), cochlear nerve (sense nerve) and then to the brain.
- A problem at any one of these sites may cause hearing loss.



## How does it affect your child?

- They can't hear properly.
- They must concentrate hard to hear.
- This makes them tired and affects their ability to learn.
- It can make them frustrated and irritable.

It can make them feel lonely and isolated because they are not always sure of what is happening around them.



## How can you help?

- Be aware.
- Try active listening techniques. (Resources available on our website.)
- Ask for help! If you think that your child may have a hearing loss, the child should be referred to an audiologist for a hearing test. You know your child better than anyone else!!!



# TECH-SAVVY TIPS FOR SAFE LISTENING

Language matters – it is the key for Learning

## Did you know?

- The first year of life is the most crucial for babies to learn language.
- 80% of brain development happens in the first 3 years of life.
- Talking, reading, singing, and playing with your baby prepares them for lifelong successful learning.

## What do babies' brains need to grow?

**Lots of talking.** The more the better. You may start reading to your baby from as young as 3 months old.

**A communication partner who is tuned in and present.** When a baby cries, coos, smiles, laughs, and gurgles, they are communicating with you. Play along, talk back.

**Your full attention.** Situations for learning take place all the time. If your baby notices a noisy car, encourage them by expanding on their interest. "Ah yes! The noisy, blue car! Can you hear it with your ears?"

## What about phones & screens?

- Screen-free family time is important!
- Screens can delay language and speech development in babies.
- Parents speak fewer words when they are using a smartphone, and they miss social cues for communicating with their baby.
- Babies need eye contact. They need to see your face and facial expressions to start understanding your emotions.
- Babies need to be given a context to understand words. People do this without noticing. Cartoons do not provide context to support language learning.
- Babies who are given a phone when they are fussing do not learn to self-soothe. A few hours of peace now may cause more problems later on.

## Guidelines for safe screentime:

**For babies under 18 months** Avoid screen time (except for video calls with family or friends). For this age group, it's crucial to focus on face-to-face interaction and physical activity, which support brain development.

**For children 18 to 24 months** Limit screen time to high-quality content and watch it with your child to help them understand what they're seeing. It's important that screen time isn't a passive activity; caregivers should be involved in guiding the experience.

**For children 2 to 5 years old** Limit screen time to no more than 1 hour per day of high-quality programming.

Again, it's best if parents or caregivers watch with the child to help them understand and process what they see.

**For children 6 years and older** Set consistent limits on screen time to ensure that it doesn't interfere with sleep, physical activity, and other healthy behaviours. Encourage a balance of screen time with other activities like outdoor play, schoolwork, and socialising.

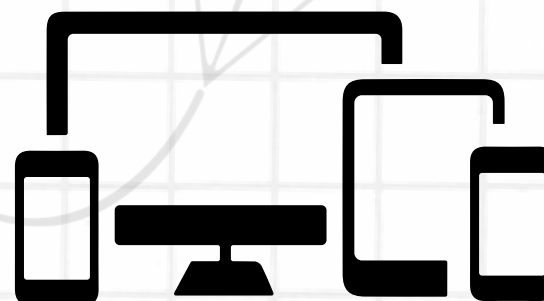
## General tips:

**Create screen-free zones.** For example, keep screens out of the bedroom and during meals.

**Model healthy screen habits.** Children often mimic the behaviour of their caregivers, so it's essential to set a positive example.

**Prioritize physical activity and sleep.** Ensure children get adequate sleep and have time for active play.

By keeping screen time in check and encouraging engagement with the real world, children can develop better social, emotional, and cognitive skills.



# EAR INFECTIONS & INFLAMMATION

Ear infections are extremely common - 5 out of 6 children will have an ear infection before turning 3 years old.

## Otitis Media with Effusion

**What is it?** Sometimes referred to as “water behind the ears” or “glue ear”. It happens when water builds up behind the ear drum. It can cause discomfort, pain, hearing loss, or a feeling of being off-balance.

Pain is more common at night; when they are falling asleep and there are fewer distractions. Pain is also more common in the morning before school; when they are feeling anxious. It does not cause high temperatures.

Children who suffer from this may snore at night or may have had a recent cold/flu/upper respiratory tract infection. Small children may not complain of anything at all, but you may notice that they are not listening well, or that they need you to repeat things.

**Why does it occur?** The Eustachian tube is a small connection between the ear and the back of the nose. Fluid in the ear can drain out of the ear and into the back of the nose through this passage. BUT this passage may get blocked if there is an infection, causing swelling and inflammation.

### How is it treated?

- Children who do not have language and communication problems - watch and wait. It usually gets better by itself within 3 months.
- Children who have language or communication problems - it is best to see an ENT specialist and an audiologist to see whether they have hearing loss and whether they need small tubes (grommets) placed in their ear drums to help drain the fluid. This is to help them hear and communicate better.

**Are some children more at risk than other children?** Yes. Children who have a cleft palate are more at risk of developing this, even if the cleft palate has been repaired. Children who live with other small children, and children who are in creche or nursery school get exposed to more germs and suffer from more infections than children who stay at home.

### How can you help?

- Understand that it will most likely get better by itself.
- Give your child panado if you think that the pain is bad.
- Ask for help if you think that your child has a communication or language problem, or if you think that they have hearing loss.

## Acute otitis media

**What is it?** It is an ear infection that has been present for less than 4 weeks. These children initially have pain, high temperatures and they are unwell. They may experience hearing loss, vomiting or pus draining from the ear.

**Why does it happen?** It is caused by germs. Small children do not have immune systems that fight infections as well as older children.

### How is it treated?

- Children who are younger than 1 year old, or have another medical condition that can affect their immune system - antibiotics and pain medication.
- Older children or children who do not have immune system concerns - treat with panado at home for 3 days, and if there is no improvement take them to the clinic for antibiotics.
- Children who have more than 5 infections in one year, need to see an ENT specialist.

### How can you help?

- Make sure that their immunisations are up to date.

## Chronic otitis media

**What is it?** It is an ear infection that has been present for more than 4 weeks.

**Why does it happen?** It is caused by a hole in the ear drum, that has not healed. The hole makes it easier for them to get repeated infections. The infections are not always painful, but present with pus draining from the ear. In some cases, the hole in the ear drum may cause hearing loss.

### How is it treated?

- Pus can be drained from the ear.
- Antibiotic ear drops.
- If the hole does not heal, an ENT specialist may repair the hole with a small operation.

### How can you help?

- Try active listening techniques. (Resources available on our website.)
- Pus draining from the ear for more than 4 weeks is not normal and your child needs to be referred to an ENT specialist.

## How can you help?

- Be aware.
- See how to drain pus from the ear (Resources available on our website.)
- Ask for help! You know your child better than anyone else!!!

