

ear infections

how they affect speech and language development

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MANY YOUNGSTERS ARE DIAGNOSED with frequent ear infections. There are others that may go undiagnosed. Children may also have impacted ear wax or fluid in the ear. Chronic sinus infections and allergies are also common in youngsters. All of these conditions can affect hearing. If hearing is impaired or inconsistent over a significant period of time, it will have an impact on speech and language development.


The ages of birth to about seven years of age are critical for speech and language development. When hearing and listening skills are impacted during this period of time, they can affect auditory processing, balance, attention, articulation, and receptive and expressive language development.

My own daughter was suffering from chronic otitis media (ear infection) when she was eighteen months old. Her speech and language skills appeared at typical ranges but her motor skills for walking and balance appeared delayed.

Many times she didn't complain and I would find out that she had an ear infection or wax build-up during an unrelated doctor visit. She seemed to acclimate to her clogged hearing. Fortunately, we went to an ear, nose and throat doctor (otolaryngologist) and she had a myringotomy (tubes inserted in the ear for drainage). Her voice became clearer, her speech and language skills soared higher than the average range where she was, and her balance and walking skills improved dramatically.

It is vital to visit your family doctor or an ear, nose and throat doctor if you see signs that your child may be suffering a temporary hearing impairment due to allergies, sinus, or ear infections. Medical treatment would be determined by the physician.

An audiologist is a professional who will help monitor specific hearing levels and middle ear pressure. This can be very important to guide parents as to what the range of loss is over time and whether or not the medical treatment is successful.

When there are articulation and language concerns after medical treatment, a visit to a speech language pathologist is recommended. Spontaneous recovery will occur after medical or surgical treatment if the condition hasn't been present for too long.  Cententri | www.cententri.com