

# From Diagnosis to Solutions: Managing Children's Hearing Issues by Henry Petersohn

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In today's world, children may encounter hearing challenges that, if left unaddressed, can significantly impact their development and well-being. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, parents must understand the signs and seek appropriate support.

## Early Problem Signs

As infants explore their surroundings, attentive parents may notice cues indicating potential hearing issues. Lack of attention or response to auditory stimuli, such as a caregiver's voice, could signify underlying hearing loss. Timely consultation with pediatricians and audiologists is essential to address concerns effectively.

## Why Good Hearing is Vital

Undiagnosed hearing impairments can impede a child's ability to communicate and engage with others, leading to social and academic difficulties. By recognizing and addressing hearing issues early, parents can help their children thrive and avoid potential developmental setbacks.



Children's hearing issues mean missed opportunities. Early intervention unlocks communication, ensures thriving, learning, and connection."

*Henry Petersohn*



Henry Petersohn

## Comprehensive Diagnosis and Treatment

The Mayo Clinic outlines a comprehensive approach to diagnosing hearing loss, including physical examinations, screening tests, and audiometer evaluations. Early identification of speech, language, swallowing, and hearing disorders is crucial for implementing effective interventions and maximizing a child's potential.

The ASHA Seven-Step Approach

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) emphasizes early identification and intervention through its seven-step approach. Recognizing feeding and swallowing disorders, language disorders, speech sound disorders, stuttering, voice disorders, and determining the degree of hearing loss are essential steps in providing optimal support for children.

Here are some typical signs of speech, language, and hearing problems. You'll see the expected age range next to each skill. Here is the seven-step ASHA approach.

- Recognizing Feeding and Swallowing Disorders in Children
- Language Disorders
- Speech Sound Disorders
- Stuttering
- Voice Disorders
- Determining the amount of Hearing Loss
- Act promptly to correct the problem and keep it from getting worse

#### 1. Signs of Feeding and Swallowing Disorders in Children

Feeding and swallowing disorders can lead to health, learning, and social problems. Feeding disorders include problems with sucking, eating from a spoon, chewing, or drinking from a cup. Swallowing disorders, also called dysphagia (dis-FAY-juh) are difficulties with moving food or liquid from the mouth, throat, or esophagus to the stomach. Feeding and swallowing disorders are often related to other medical conditions but may also occur without a known cause.

Your child may have a feeding or swallowing problem if they:

- arch their back or stiffen when feeding
- cry or fuss when feeding
- fall asleep when feeding
- have problems breastfeeding
- have trouble breathing while eating and drinking
- refuse to eat or drink
- eat only certain textures, such as soft food or crunchy food
- take a long time to eat
- pocket (which means to hold food in their mouth)
- have problems chewing
- cough or gag during meals
- drool a lot or have liquid come out of their mouth or nose
- get stuffy during meals
- have a gurgly, hoarse, or breathy voice during or after meals
- spit up or throw up a lot



CHILDREN'S HEARING PROBLEMS

- are not gaining weight or growing

## 2. Language Disorders

Language is made up of the words we use to share ideas and get what we want. Language includes listening, speaking, understanding, reading, and writing. A child with a language disorder may have trouble with one or more of these skills. Signs of language problems include:

Birth–3 months - Not smiling or playing with others

4–7 months - Not babbling

7–12 months - Making only a few sounds. Not using gestures, like waving or pointing.

7 months - 2 years Not understanding what others say

12–18 months - Saying only a few words

1½–2 years - Not putting two words together

2 years - Saying fewer than 50 words

2–3 years - Having trouble playing and talking with other children

2½–3 years - Having problems with early reading and writing. For example, your child may not like to draw or look at books.

You can help your child learn language by

- Talking, reading, and playing with your child.
- Listening and responding to what your child says.
- Talking with your child in the language that you are most comfortable using.
- Teaching your child to speak another language, if you speak one.
- Talking about what you do and what your child does during the day.
- Using a lot of different words with your child.
- Using longer sentences, as your child gets older.
- Having your child play with other children.

## 3. Speech Sound Disorders

Speech is how we say sounds and words. It is normal for young children to say some sounds the wrong way. Some sounds do not develop until a child is 4, 5, or 6 years old. Signs of a speech sound disorder in young children include:

1–2 years - Not saying p, b, m, h, and w the right way in words most of the time

2–3 years - Not saying k, g, f, t, d, and n the right way in words most of the time. Being hard to understand, even to people who know the child well.

You can help your child learn to say sounds by

- Saying sounds the right way when you talk. Your child needs good speech models.
- Not correcting speech sounds. It is okay if your child says some sounds the wrong way.

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