

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

What Is an Audiologist?

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An *audiologist* is a trained, licensed professional who tests your child's hearing. If the audiologist diagnoses your child with a hearing loss, he/she will then provide treatment and management of the hearing loss. An audiologist may recommend hearing aids or other types of devices to help improve your child's hearing. The word *amplification* refers to devices that help improve a child's level of hearing.



Where Do Audiologists Work?



Audiologists work in many different settings. Hospitals, private practice offices, schools, hearing and speech rehabilitation centers, and health clinics are some of the places you may see audiologists working. They may also work in universities, state and federal government agencies, health departments, or research laboratories. Some audiologists specialize in working with children, and others with adults. Each setting holds different responsibilities for the audiologist, so it is important to choose the correct type of audiologist in the appropriate setting for your child.

How Do I Find an Audiologist?



Regardless of the setting you choose, it is important that you take your child to a **certified pediatric audiologist**—an audiologist who specializes in working with children. Tests and testing techniques for children are different than those for adults. The term *certified* means that the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has given the audiologist a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) stating that he/she is skilled at diagnosing and managing hearing related disorders.

There are several ways to go about finding an audiologist if you are concerned about your child's hearing. You may start by contacting your local children's hospital. Hospitals have different names for the department you need. These key words may help you find the correct department of the hospital: pediatric audiology, hearing and speech, or center for hearing. Your local school district may also have an audiologist that can screen your child's hearing, or make appropriate recommendations. ASHA also provides a search engine to find audiologists around the country:

<http://www.asha.org/proserv/>

What Do Audiologists Treat?

Below is a list of common hearing problems with a brief explanation of each:



- **Deafness/Hearing Loss** - inability or difficulty hearing certain tones due to a physical impairment



- **Auditory Processing Disorder** - breakdown in the ability to understand what is heard



- **Vertigo** - dizziness, balance issues
- **Other Hearing Related Issues** - wax removal, hearing aid distribution, tinnitus—ringing in the ear(s), etc.

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What Should I Expect at My Child's First Appointment?

Hearing tests may differ depending on your child's age. An audiologist will use specialized equipment, typically in a sound-treated, soundproof room. He/she will look at your child's ear canals and eardrums, ask questions about history of ear infections and speech and language development, and use specialized equipment to screen or test your child's hearing. The audiologist may ask you to help during testing, for example, by holding your child on your lap or encouraging your child to participate.

It is never too early to have your child's hearing tested. Infants' hearing can be screened. For more information on why this is important, see **Handy Handout® #137 Detecting Hearing Loss: What's the Hurry?**

Questions to Ask the Audiologist

The audiologist will ask you questions about your child's medical and developmental history as part of your child's hearing evaluation. There may be questions you want to ask the audiologist. Here are a few questions to ask your child's audiologist.

Prior to the Appointment



- What age group do you work with?
- What ages and types of hearing loss are your specialties?
- How quickly can you see my child, and what are methods of payment/funding?



- After the evaluation, is there a waiting list for treatment?
- Do you dispense hearing aids?
- Are you certified by ASHA and/or licensed by the state?

During the Appointment



- Do both ears have the same hearing loss?
- Is the loss permanent or temporary?
- What are the possible causes of my child's hearing loss?



- How will this type/degree of loss impact my child's speech, language, and learning?
- How will my child's education be affected? What are my options for school support?



- What do I tell my child's teacher(s) about his/her hearing loss?
- What type of amplification do you suggest, and why?



- What are the advantages and disadvantages of different types of amplification?
- How do I find funding for amplification?



- How often will my child need equipment adjustments, and how much will it cost (such as new earmolds, new maps for a cochlear implant(s), or even batteries)?



- What will my child hear with the hearing aid(s)/cochlear implant(s)?
- What if my child rejects the hearing aid(s)/cochlear implant(s)?

Resources:

ASHA. (2008). Fact sheet: Audiology. Retrieved April 16, 2008, from <http://www.asha.org/public/audiology.htm>

American Academy of Audiology. (2008). What is an audiologist? (And other questions about audiology). Retrieved April 16, 2008, from <http://www.audiology.org/aboutaudiology/consumerfaqs/>

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