

Auditory Processing Disorders (APD) A Guide for Parents

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What is APD?

Children with Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) have trouble processing sounds. For example, a child with APD may hear a sound, but not be able to make sense of it.

Children with APD may:

- Have difficulty following instructions.
- Not know where a sound is coming from.
- Have poor memory for speech.
- Have trouble understanding speech in a noisy room.
- Seem easily distracted.
- Find it difficult to understand fast talkers or unfamiliar accents.
- Often ask you to repeat (e.g., "huh?", "what?") or misunderstand you.

At school, children with APD may have:

- Delayed expressive language and comprehension abilities.
- Poor reading, writing, and spelling.
- Difficulty taking notes.
- Weak short-term memory.
- Behavioural, psychological, and/or social problems resulting from poor language and academic skills.

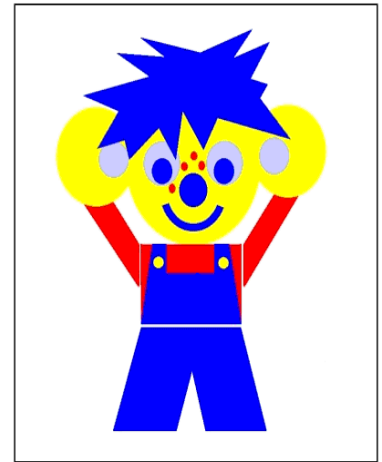
Children with these characteristics are candidates for APD testing.

Diagnosis

Because of the wide range of factors associated with APD, many professionals are involved in the diagnosis. For example:

- Educators may provide information about academic difficulties.
- Psychologists may assess cognitive skills.
- Speech pathologists may evaluate written and oral language.

An audiologist will assess the child's ability to hear in ideal circumstances, and compare it with more difficult listening situations (eg. listening with background noise, when speech is muffled, or when different words are presented simultaneously to the two ears).



The audiologist may also evaluate your child's ability to perform specific tasks that are associated with the auditory centres in the brain and brain stem. These include listening for gaps between two sounds, listening for a pattern, or determining where a sound is coming from.

These tests are practical for use with children aged 7 years and up; it is difficult to interpret test results on younger children because of large individual differences. Finally, tests may be used to measure the brain's responses to sound.

Some of the identified types of APD are:

- (a) Auditory Decoding Deficit
- (b) Output/Organization Deficit
- (c) Tolerance-Fading Memory Deficit
- (d) Prosodic Deficit
- (e) Integration Deficit

Management Techniques Used by Speech Language Pathologists

1. Auditory training may be used to improve your child's ability to:

- Distinguish between speech sounds; e.g. /b/ and /p/.
- Associate the speech sounds to the written letter(s).
- Identify words in background noise.
- Identify the location of the sound.
- Recognize patterns and intonation.

2. Compensatory strategies are used to support your child's listening skills. These include:

- Increasing understanding of the sounds that make up words.
- Increasing knowledge of different words by associating them to familiar situations; e.g. food and clothing names.
- Learning to identify and resolve difficult listening situations.

3. Cognitive training may involve some of the following goals:

- Learning organizational skills such as using written notes, checklists, calendar, etc.
- Asking and answering relevant questions.
- Learning memory techniques: verbal rehearsal, mnemonics.

4. Recommendations for environmental modifications:

- Sit the child closer to the source of sound (e.g. teacher's voice).
- Reduce background noise when talking (e.g. television, music, open windows)
- Use sound absorbing materials to reduce echoes and noise (e.g. carpets, curtains)
- Use visual aids for the topics being discussed (e.g. pictures and written material).
- Speak more slowly, emphasize the most important words, and pausing enough for the child to catch up.
- Get the child's attention before speaking, and repeat directions.
- Allow the child to use a tape recorder and/or peer note taker.



- Assign the child a “listening buddy” for checking verbal directions and assignments.

The management strategies that best suit your child will be determined by the team, and will depend on his or her specific skills and difficulties.

FM Systems

Listening can be a challenge, especially in less than ideal circumstances. FM systems are one option for improving clarity in the classroom. An FM system has two parts, a microphone-transmitter that the teacher wears, and a receiver that the child has. The child’s receiver can be connected to earphones or to a hearing aid.

FM systems allow the child to hear the teacher’s voice more clearly, as if they were standing less than a foot away from each other. This also makes the teacher’s voice louder relative to the background noise.

Although FM systems have many advantages, they are not suitable for all children with APD. For some children with APD, the main difficulty is not related to speech clarity.

Whether an FM system is recommended for your child will depend on his or her specific profile.

Parent Resources for APD (Websites):

Central Auditory Processing Disorder

<http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/capd.html>

- Introduction
- What is CAPD?
- Characteristics Observed In the Classroom
- Evaluation
- Treatment

Parenting a Child with Central Auditory Processing Disorder

<http://specialchildren.about.com/od/auditoryprocessing/>

- First 5 Things to Do After Diagnosis
- Preparing the School for Your Child With CAPD
- What is CAPD?
- What is APD?

What is Auditory Processing Disorder or CAPD?

http://www.bbbautism.com/auditory_processing_disorder.htm

- Definition
- What to Do if You Suspect a Problem
- Different Parts of APD
- Typical Behaviours
- Strategies for Parents
- What a Teacher Can Do to Help In the Classroom

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