

Auditory Processing Disorders

Auditory processing disorders (APD) are defined by a deficit in the information processing part of the brain, rather than a loss of hearing ability.

Hearing is an extremely complex process, involving many complicated neural networks between various parts of the brain responsible for tasks such as identification, analysis, recognition, comprehension and recollection of words and sounds.

While you or your child may not have deficits attributed to hearing or intelligence, difficulties in the cognitive processes of hearing may stem from a mild dysfunction in the brain.

Symptoms Vary

Since neurocognitive functions are multifaceted, symptoms tend to vary according to the nature of each person's deficit.

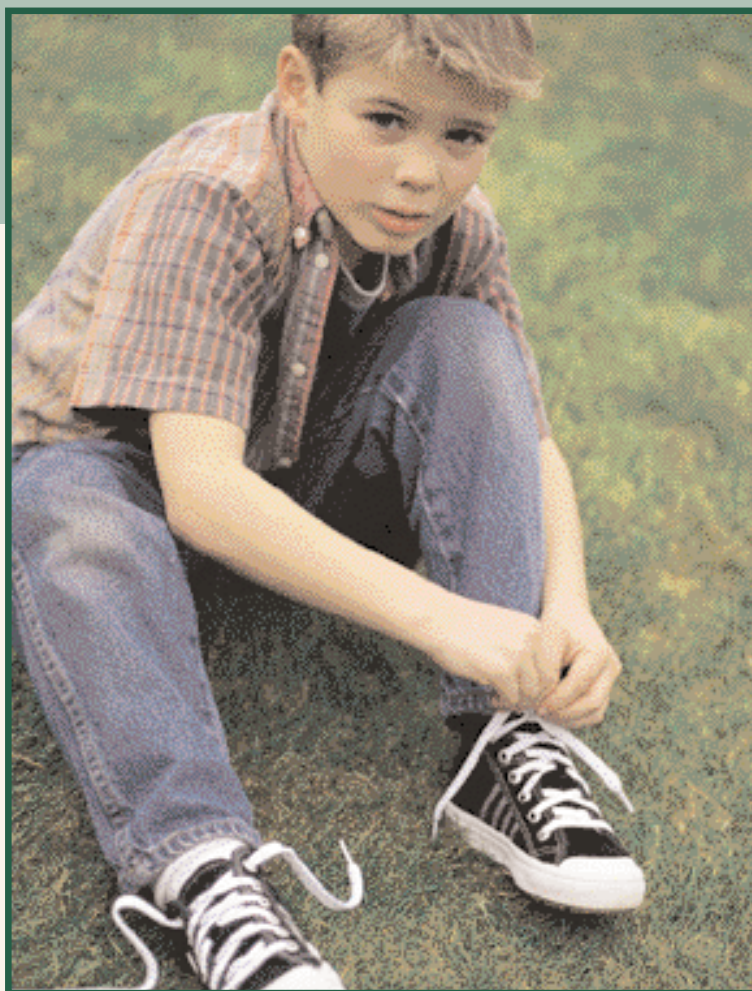
The most common signs of APD include unusual sensitivity to or distraction caused by noise; upset caused by noisy environments, with performance improving in more quiet settings; a tendency to "ignore" a speaker, especially when engrossed in something else; inability to remember directions in a series; a prevalence of careless mistakes; difficulty with perceiving the direction of sound; perception of speech sounds as distorted; poor attention; confusion of certain words or groups of words; difficulty following common conversations and abstract thoughts; and difficulties in communication, reading, spelling, writing or other speech-language areas.

For More Information

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
www.asha.org

LD Online
www.ldonline.org

Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org



PHOTO/COURTESY SIEMENS HEARING INSTRUMENTS

Symptoms can range from mild to severe and take many different forms.¹

Test Protocol

Once a trained audiologist or speech-language pathologist has determined that your child has APD, the child should receive a standard test for hearing loss. If his or her behavior cannot be explained by a hearing loss, there is reason to suspect APD.²

It is generally accepted that no one test is sufficiently sensitive to evaluate all APD problems; therefore, a battery of tests is usually the assessment method of choice. These include behavioral tests and electrophysiologic tests, which measure the brain's response to sounds. The selection of types is based on a number of factors, including age, specific difficulties displayed and cognitive status.³

Management Strategies

Handling APD involves making alterations to the environments that evoke the symptoms.

For example, classroom management strategies could help significantly. These may involve teachers providing more visual material, making acoustic modifications, reseating a troubled student, or speaking more clearly.

Assistive listening devices also are an option.

References

1. Kids Health, accessed via www.kidshealth.org/parent/medical/ears/central_auditory.html
2. LD Online, accessed via www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/process_deficit/capd_paton.html
3. Central Auditory Processing—An Overview of Assessment and Management Practices, accessed via www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring00/centralauditory.htm

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