

# Central Auditory Processing Disorder

## What is Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD)?

Central auditory processing disorder (CAPD) is a complex problem that makes it hard for children to make sense of speech and the sounds around them.

The brain and ears do not communicate effectively which makes it hard to interpret the sounds that make up speech.

Children with this disorder cannot understand and process what they hear in the same way other children do.

CAPD is also known as:

- auditory processing disorder
- auditory perception problem
- central auditory dysfunction
- central deafness or word deafness.

## What Causes CAPD?

In most cases, the cause of CAPD is unknown.

CAPD may be caused by:

- a brain injury, stroke, seizure or other illness or injury that affects the brain
- auditory deprivation (hearing loss is ignored and left untreated)
- premature birth or low birth weight.

CAPD could also be genetic (runs in families).

It's possible that CAPD can happen with other disorders such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, autism spectrum disorder, language impairment, learning disability and developmental delay.

Hearing loss does not cause CAPD.

## What are the Signs of CAPD?

Children with CAPD usually have normal hearing and intelligence, but may have trouble:

- localizing to sound (being able to tell where the sound is coming from)
- understanding spoken language in noisy backgrounds or when it spoken quickly
- saying "what" and "huh" often, and asking often for what was said to be repeated
- following multi-step instructions
- understanding messages such as hearing speech changes to interpret sarcasm or jokes
- paying attention and seem easily distracted.

## What Should You Do if You Think Your Child has CAPD?

Call your child's health care provider if your child is showing signs of CAPD. He or she may refer your child to a hearing specialist (audiologist).

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The audiologist will make sure your child does not have any hearing problems.

If your child does not have any hearing problems, the audiologist will give your child a series of tests to determine if:

- your child has CAPD
- other factors may be causing your child to have trouble making sense of speech and sounds.

Your child will be referred to a speech therapist (also known as speech-language pathologist) if he or she has CAPD. The speech therapist will evaluate the speech and sounds your child is not understanding.

Together, the audiologist and the speech therapist will create a treatment plan that is right for your child and family.

## How is CAPD Treated?

Treatment for CAPD will usually include:

- Skills training: Your child will learn activities to make his or her auditory processing skills stronger.
- Compensatory strategies: Your child will learn how to use other skills (problem solving, memory, organization) to make up for troubles with auditory processing.
- Environmental changes. The speech therapist will work you and your child's school to find ways to:
  - reduce noise and distractions at school
  - use more visual or written materials
  - slow down how fast people speak.

## How Much Will My Child Improve with Treatment?

Each child responds differently to treatment. Some children make more progress than others do. It will depend on the severity and cause of the CAPD and your child's age.

You will play an important role in your child's care. Your child's speech therapist will ask you to watch your child at home. Support from family will make a difference in your child's treatment.