

Patient information factsheet

Auditory processing disorder (APD)

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about auditory processing disorder (APD). It explains what APD is and how it is managed. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

What is auditory processing disorder (APD)?

Auditory processing disorder (APD) is a condition which affects how the brain interprets sound. Children with this condition usually have normal hearing but have difficulty recognising sounds or understanding speech.

What causes APD?

There is no known cause of APD. Research suggests that it may be an inherited condition, as some parents report having had similar problems as a child.

What are the symptoms of APD?

Children with APD may have difficulties with listening, or making sense of the sounds heard, particularly in noisy environments, such as classrooms. Some parents realise their child has difficulties with understanding from an early age, but most of the time, APD is identified when children start school.

If your child has APD, you may notice that they:

- often ask for things to be repeated
- have difficulties following spoken instructions, particularly if there are multiple tasks
- struggle to tell similar sounds apart
- struggle to understand and recall the order of sounds and words
- struggle to recall what they have heard
- have difficulty following conversation, particularly if there is background noise
- are easily distracted by background noise (for example, the television)
- have difficulties with reading and spelling

APD affects every child differently. If your child has any additional conditions, such as dyslexia or an attention difficulty, their symptoms of APD may be worse.

How is APD diagnosed?

A hearing test will be performed to check that your child doesn't have any hearing loss. After this, more complex hearing tests will be performed to check whether your child is able to:

- understand speech with different levels of background noise
- notice small changes in sounds

Complex hearing tests for APD will not usually be performed on children under seven years old. These complex tests can only be performed at specialist centres in London, or privately at the University of Southampton. Please note that there may be a charge for these services. We can refer your child for these tests, but additional information, such as reports from education psychology and/or speech and language therapy, can help support our referral.

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Will APD affect my child's progress at school?

Your child may need additional support at school, but APD will not usually affect your child's progress.

How is APD treated?

While there is no cure for APD, there are some things that can help reduce the effects of the condition, including:

- auditory training programmes (these can help improve your child's listening and concentration skills)
- minimising background noise (where possible)
- making certain adjustments at school so your child can hear their teachers better:
 - sitting at the front of the classroom
 - using radio receivers (a small microphone worn by the teacher which is connected wirelessly to a speaker on your child's desk or worn in their ear) in the classroom (these are not available on the NHS, but it is possible to try before buying through the 'Borrow to Buy' scheme run by the National Deaf Children's Society)

Many children diagnosed with APD find that their condition naturally improves as they get older.

What can I do to help my child at home?

To help your child hear you more clearly at home, you should:

- get your child's attention before speaking to them
- speak clearly and at a normal pace
- reduce background noise (where possible)
- emphasise your speech to highlight key points of the message
- avoid covering your mouth when you speak

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

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Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/auditory-processing-disorder

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