

Auditory Processing Disorder

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Can a person have normal hearing, pass a hearing test and still be diagnosed with auditory processing disorder? What are the symptoms of auditory processing disorder? Are there other conditions similar to auditory processing disorder?

Auditory processing disorder (APD) is also known as Central Auditory Processing Disorder. This is a neurological disorder that makes it difficult for children to process and interpret sounds that they hear. APD has nothing to do with not being able to hear. In fact, if you suspect APD one of the first things you should do is talk to your child's pediatrician and rule out hearing problems by asking for a hearing test.

When someone has APD there is a breakdown in receiving, remembering, and understanding spoken language. This can create different symptoms depending on the individual, but often children show some of the following symptoms.

- ✓ Don't hear subtle differences between sounds in words.
- ✓ Find it difficult to tell what direction sounds are coming from.
- ✓ Have trouble blocking out background noise when they are in a noisy setting.
- ✓ Find it hard to follow conversations.
- ✓ Easily distracted due to difficulty processing oral information.
- ✓ Ask for things to be repeated frequently.
- ✓ Difficulty with reading and spelling because of trouble processing and interpreting sounds.
- ✓ Mispronouncing similar sounding words (three/free, celery/salary, bog/bag, chop/shop)
- ✓ Processes information slowly and has trouble comprehending rapid speech.
- ✓ Figurative language may be tricky.
- ✓ Difficulty following conversations.
- ✓ Following spoken directions is difficult – especially multi-step directions.



- ✓ Hyper-sensitive hearing.
- ✓ Articulation problems when speaking.
- ✓ Musical ability can be poor.
- ✓ Avoiding social conversations (telling stories and jokes) because it's hard to process spoken words and construct appropriate responses in a timely manner.

There are many symptoms of APD that are also symptoms of other disorders. Because of this, it can be confusing to determine what the actual problem is without getting help from a trained professional. Though symptoms may overlap, the root cause of the problem is what needs to be determined in order to get an accurate diagnosis of the issue.

For instance, APD is often confused with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) because many of the symptoms are similar. Current research suggests that some individuals are diagnosed incorrectly with ADD when they really have APD because both cause attention issues. So, what's the main difference? APD's underlying issue is the inability to process correctly what is being spoken. ADD's main issue is the inability to focus and maintain attention, which in turn affects processing and understanding. You can see how these two disorders can have quite a bit of overlap. Treatment for ADD would be different from treatment for APD.

There is also overlap between APD and dyslexia. In fact, research has suggested that auditory processing issues are a contributing factor in people with dyslexia. These two disorders have several symptoms in common. In both disorders reading, spelling, and writing can be affected. Phonemic awareness is affected, speech, auditory discrimination, and more.

Lastly, it's important to note that APD is not the only type of language and/or communication deficit. If you are looking for answers, a good place to start is your family pediatrician. From there, the pediatrician should be able to guide and direct you to the appropriate specialist. They may suggest having an evaluation or screening done by a speech and language pathologist or they may refer you directly to an audiologist. Audiologists are the only professionals that can diagnose APD.

About Kelly

Kelly Steinke, M.A. Ed., NBCT is the founder of READ Learning Educational Services, LLC. Kelly taught special education, primarily to students with learning disabilities, for over 15 years in the Midwest, East Coast, and Pacific Northwest. During this time she became a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) in Exceptional Needs, earned a Master of Arts Degree in Education (Administration



and Leadership), and founded her company, READ Learning Educational Services, LLC. For the past six years, Kelly has served the community as a dyslexia specialist. Kelly is the also the creator of Silver Moon Spelling Rules™ instructional materials.

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