

Common signs/symptoms of APD in a young child

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APD is a neurological disability affecting the way in which the brain processes sound including speech. Here are some of the signs that APD might be present and these can be seen from an early age. The effects will remain into late childhood, teenage years and adulthood too. APD is for life.

- Appearing not to hear when you speak unless you attract their attention first – it can be questioned whether the child is hearing properly, but hearing tests are normal;
- Misunderstanding spoken instructions (poor auditory processing of speech) and may ask 'what?' a lot, showing that what people are saying makes no sense to them;
- Forgetting spoken instructions (poor auditory memory);
- Jumbling up the order of spoken instructions (poor auditory sequencing),
- Not being able to understand speech when there is background noise (auditory figure-ground difficulty) – or their comprehension may be worse when there is noise.

A child with APD may not have all of the difficulties, but they will be seen often – although they might be intermittent and random in severity and frequency, better or worse at different times of the day. Effects of APD are also worse when a person is ill, tired or stressed, because coping strategies fail due to the brain coping with those situations. Any other co-existing conditions can also make them worse - and APD can co-exist with pretty much any other conditions/disabilities.

They may need things either rephrased or repeated over and over. Or they may still not understand.

They may also need to use visual cues to help understanding, like lip-reading and focusing on a person's facial expressions or hand movements/body language.

Some children with APD can have a delay in learning to speak, due to not processing speech sounds (phonemes) accurately enough to be able to reproduce them correctly.

As they get older they may have problems learning to read for the same reason (problem with phonics).

They may also think they have heard something that you didn't say and may argue that what they thought they heard was correct, at home and at school - this isn't bad behaviour or 'attitude', they aren't lying, they truly believe what they think is true and they can't trust their own brain. E.g. you might say "Don't draw on the walls!" and they might think you said "Write on the walls!" because the 'Don't' has been lost! An extreme example but it can happen. Another, more serious one, is "Don't cross the road!" Kids with APD can be in danger because of their APD if they mis-process speech like that, and also if they cannot process which way traffic is coming from, or if they don't process/react to fire alarms etc. APD is not an attentional issue - they try so hard to understand but their brain lets them down.

APD isn't just about school. It affects all aspects of life, throughout a person's life. APD affects socialisation too, because of misunderstandings in communication, and they might fall out with friends over what they perceive has been said or think other kids are talking about them when they aren't. If you suspect APD in your child, please have them tested by an audiologist specialising in APD. The sooner you have your child tested, the more help they will get and the earlier they can be helped to start developing vital coping strategies and self advocacy skills. In the UK they will test from age 6 at Great Ormond Street Hospital with a GP or audiologist referral to the APD Testing Centre. Please email them for details. <http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/health-professionals/clinical-specialties/audiological-medicine-information-for-health-professionals/meet-the-team-cs/tony-sirimanna/> Or visit APD Support UK <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1505407259721683/> for details of other testing centres and support and details on adult testing.