

## Early hearing screening reduces communication delays

For many of us, waking up to the sounds of birds chirping is a sure sign of spring! Perhaps then it's no surprise that May is designated as Speech and Hearing Month in Canada. Speech and hearing may seem an unlikely pair at first glance, but learning to speak is usually accompanied by the ability to hear.

In fact, communication skills start to develop as soon as a child is born. Just spend some time around infants and young children and you'll be convinced that the first five years are the most critical period for growth. Like little sponges, they soak up stimulation with every sense available!

The key to preventing or overcoming a communication problem is the early identification of hearing, speech and language disorders. Without early screening, many babies with hearing loss go undetected because it's not easy to identify a hearing loss just by watching a baby's behaviour.

When a baby can't hear well, he or she may have problems learning to talk and develop language skills. Early screening can reduce the language delays that a child with hearing loss may experience by connecting the child and family with the support and care they need. Even if no one in your family has a hearing loss, it is still important to have your baby's hearing screened.

Many hospitals in BC are providing hearing screening shortly after babies are born. For babies who are not screened while in the hospital, hearing screening is offered at numerous public health centres across Interior Health.

Communication is what links us to our world yet our ability to communicate is an easy gift to take for granted. According to the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), the ability to communicate effectively with others is the very foundation of a child's social, emotional and educational development.

Hearing screening helps your child become the best communicator they can be. Take advantage of the early hearing screening program and if you think your child has a hearing problem, call your local health centre and ask to speak to an audiologist or talk to a public health nurse or your family doctor.

To find out more visit these websites:

[www.caslpa.ca](http://www.caslpa.ca)

[www.bcaslpa.ca](http://www.bcaslpa.ca)

[www.phsa.ca/AgenciesAndServices/Services/BCEarlyHearing/default.htm](http://www.phsa.ca/AgenciesAndServices/Services/BCEarlyHearing/default.htm)

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