

# Hearing Matters

*By*

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*Hearing and youth*

Today's youth are at a higher risk than ever of having a significant hearing loss. This can be attributed to the fact that they are exposed to loud noises especially since many use personal listening devices which include placing earphones in or on the ear. With the volume turned up full blast, you can imagine the effect this has on the eardrums. There is no wonder that 6 out of every 1000 children has a hearing loss and research has shown that this number is on the rise!

According to a report released by the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Speech-Language pathologists, The government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes that communication impairment is a serious issue for many of the province's youth and has allotted funds to improve services for children with hearing loss and speech-language disorders.

In the 2007 Budget Speech, the Honourable Tom Marshall, Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board, announced the implementation of a new bilateral cochlear implant service for the province. It is wonderful to see that the government is taking steps to help children with hearing loss. All infants and children should be screened for hearing loss, as early diagnosis and intervention can have a dramatic impact on the child's future development and educational needs.

How can you tell if a child might have a hearing problem? If a child does not respond to noises or responds slowly to noises, the child might have a hearing problem. If a child does not speak by the expected age or lags behind in developing motor skills and coordination, the child might have a hearing problem. Profoundly deaf children are usually diagnosed by the age of two. The biggest obstacles to early diagnosis are a delay to a referral to a specialist or a lack of access to appropriate infant screening. This is especially true when the signs of hearing loss are not recognized.

School is just around the corner and there are some things that teachers can do to make school life more compatible for the hearing impaired child.

Speaking slowly and clearly is very important. Using visual aids where possible will immensely help the hearing impaired child. One parent of a hearing impaired child told me that a complaint she had was that her child's teacher did not speak to her child at eye level. It is very crucial for a hearing impaired child to see a person's lips and face because of the speech reading factor. If there is much background noise, take the child to a quieter area when communicating with him or her. Most of all, make the learning environment as stress free as possible.

**Until next time, protect your hearing.**