

Best Practice Procedures for Hearing Evaluation in Infants

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Accurate assessment of hearing sensitivity and auditory system integrity is critical to the timely provision of optimal early intervention services. Currently, audiologists are faced with meeting the hearing evaluation needs of infants who have been identified as being at risk for hearing loss through newborn screening programs. This results in early referral for confirmatory audiological testing well before the age of 6 months. Some proportion of the infants who will be referred for hearing evaluation have one or more co-occurring medical and neurological risk factors.

Over the first year of life, repeated audiological evaluations are necessary to initially determine the type, degree, and configuration of the hearing loss and over time, to fully characterize hearing in both ears across the speech frequency range. This is critical for the optimum fitting and refining of hearing aids. In addition, the audiological evaluations performed regularly in the early years of life allow the stability of the hearing loss to be monitored.

A comprehensive audiologic test battery that includes otoacoustic, electrophysiologic and behavioral test procedures will be discussed and suggestions for implementation provided.

