

Pure tone audiometry

Pure tone audiometry is the most commonly used method of testing adults' hearing and can be used with children from around 5 years of age dependant on certain circumstances. This test requires the child to sit with headphones on and press a button whenever they hear a tone. This test sometimes involves using the special headphones which sit on the bone behind one ear. Pure tone audiometry gives information about individual ears instead of hearing as a whole which is very useful to the Audiologist.

Tympanometry

Tympanometry is a valuable test as it does not require your child to do anything other than sit still and allow the audiologist to place a soft tip in their ear. This test can be done at any age. Tympanometry does not measure true hearing but it can indicate whether there is any fluid in the middle ear which is preventing the eardrum from moving correctly.

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How we test
your children's
hearing

In the audiology department we have many different ways to test children's hearing. The type of test we choose to do will depend on the developmental age of your child and what information we want to find out.

ABR

If your baby is referred from the neonatal hearing screening programme then they will have this test done. An ABR (Auditory Brainstem Response) test involves placing sticky pads onto the baby's head in certain places which measure their brain activity when sounds are played into their ears. This test needs to be done whilst your child is asleep naturally and so it is important to let the department know if they are normally asleep at a particular time of day.

Distraction testing

Distraction testing is usually done between a child's developmental age of six to 18 months. This test involves the child sitting on their parents lap watching an Audiologist playing with a toy. Another audiologist will make different types of sounds behind the child and see if they turn or respond to these noises. This will give some information about your child's hearing overall but will not give information specific to each ear.

Visual reinforcement audiometry

Visual Reinforcement Audiometry (VRA) is similar to distraction testing and is usually done from a developmental age of six months up until around 36 months. This test also involves the child sitting on their parents lap watching an audiologist playing with a toy. However, in this test, tones will be played from loudspeakers. The child is watched to see if they turn to sounds and if they turn they are 'rewarded' with a colourful picture on a TV screen. VRA does not test each ear individually unless the sounds are delivered through earphones into the child's ear.

Performance testing

Performance Testing is a more interactive hearing test and so requires a development age of around 30 months. This test requires the child to complete an action (such as putting pegs in a board) when they hear a sound from the handheld speaker in front of them. Performance testing also does not test each ear individually.

Play audiometry

Play audiometry is a very useful test as the child wears headphones allowing us to get information from both ears individually. This test is normally used from a developmental age of 36 months and involves the child completing an action (such as placing men in a boat) when they hear a sound through their headphones. Sometimes special headphones which just sit on the bone behind one ear are used. These can help to show whether there is any fluid in the ear affecting the hearing.

A child performing play audiometry

