

## What can I do at home?

### Protect your hearing

Listening to just a single song at full volume with headphones or ear buds could damage your hearing forever.<sup>1</sup>

### Build a language-rich environment

- **Read with your child**

Talk about the printed words, the characters and events in the story, and similar situations in your child's life.

- **Talk to your child throughout the day**

While playing games, shopping, eating, and exploring.

- **Use a variety of words and sentences**

Young children benefit from hearing a lot of language. Older children benefit from hearing more complex language (expressing the same concepts with more advanced words and sentence structures).

### Minimize screen time<sup>2</sup>

Children develop speech and language skills by using them with other people.

- Under age 2: no screen time
- Ages 2-5: up to 1 hour of screen time/day

## Who we are

**Speech-language pathologists** are health professionals who identify, diagnose and treat communication and swallowing disorders across the lifespan.<sup>3</sup>

**Audiologists** are hearing health professionals who identify, diagnose and manage individuals with peripheral or central hearing loss, tinnitus, vestibular and balance disorders and other communication disorders across the lifespan.<sup>4</sup>

**Speech-language pathology and audiology assistants** implement treatment plans.

## When to call us

- Swallowing is difficult or impossible.
- It sounds like everyone around you is mumbling.
- You hear a bothersome ringing/ buzzing/clicking in your ears.
- Your child is harder to understand than other children their age.
- Difficulty communicating with or understanding others.
- Any other communication, hearing, or swallowing concern.

Referrals for Speech, Language & Hearing Services can be made by anyone.



### Medicine Hat Regional Hospital

403-528-8175 Fax: 403-528-8190

### Brooks Community Health Services

403-501-3308 Fax: 403-501-3323

### Bow Island Community Health Services

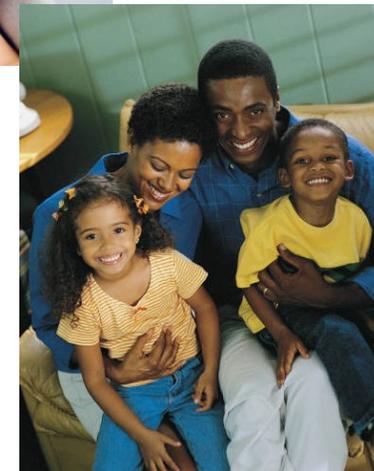
403-545-5125 Fax: 403-545-6357

### Oyen Community Health Services

403-664-3651 Fax: 403-664-2934

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

## Speech, Language & Hearing Services



**Our Services are free of charge from birth to adulthood, funded through Alberta Health Care Insurance.**

# Speech Sounds

**The production and sequencing of sounds when talking (e.g., 'sh' in shout and caution; 'f' in fun and rough).**

Children learn how to say individual speech sounds at different ages. In general, when your child speaks, strangers should be able to understand.<sup>5</sup>

% OF WORDS	BY AGE
50	2
75	3
100	4

Children should correctly produce all speech sounds by around age 8.

## Aids to identify a concern

Does your child ...

- usually say 'k' for 't' (e.g., kwo for two)?
- sound 'slushy' when saying any of these sounds: s/z/sh/ch/j?
- leave off the first sound in words (e.g., ite for kite)?

# Voice

**Loudness, quality, and pitch sufficient for daily needs.**

Treatment can be provided after assessment and diagnosis by an Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) doctor.

## Aids to identify a concern

- Does the voice sound hoarse, breathy, or crack?
- Difficulty using the voice to meet daily needs.

# Language

**Understanding and using words and sentences in all forms – spoken, written, signed – and for various purposes (e.g., commenting, directing, telling stories).**

Language skills and demands increase from infancy to beyond secondary school. Skills to look for in your child include:<sup>6</sup>

SKILL	BY AGE
Use 2 word sentences	2
Use 3-4 word sentences	3
Retell a story, naming characters and talking about what happened	5
Follow 3-step directions without cues	5
Announce changes in topic	6

## Aids to identify a concern

Does your child ...

- understand directions or stories less than same-age peers?
- produce shorter or less-complete sentences than same-age peers?
- miss facial expression or tone of voice cues to what a person means?

# Hearing

The hearing system is complex, sensitive, and important for speech, language, and cognition. Hearing loss has a number of causes, including noise exposure, genetic conditions, and injury.

## Aids to identify a concern

- Can't hear the tv when others set the volume.
- Favour listening with one ear.
- Continually ask others to speak up or repeat themselves.
- Bothersome ringing/buzzing/clicking in the ears.

# Stuttering

**An involuntary loss of control of the speech system that disrupts the smooth forward flow of speech (aka Fluency).**

A true stutter (that will not go away on its own) can be managed with appropriate treatment. It typically becomes a problem when stuttering prevents individuals from saying what they want to say, when they want to say it.

## Aids to identify a concern

- 3 or more repetitions at a time (e.g., t-t-time).
- Family history of stuttering.
- Blocks in the forward flow of speech (e.g., t-[pause]-ime)
- Stuttering that persists longer than a year.
- Avoidance of life activities due to a fear of stuttering or of others' perception of stuttering.
- Observable reactions to the stuttering event (e.g., body movements or negative comments about stuttering or speaking ability).

# Swallowing

Feeding and swallowing difficulties (i.e., dysphagia) can negatively affect nutrition, overall health, and quality of life. Swallowing difficulties can affect individuals at any stage of life.

## Aids to identify a concern

- Frequent coughing or watery eyes when swallowing.
- Noisy or wet vocal quality during or after eating.
- During feeding, does your infant arch its back, have breathing difficulties, or show difficulties managing saliva?