

My Child has Trouble Understanding: A Receptive Language Disorder

What is a “Receptive Language” Disorder?

- This means your child has trouble understanding what is said to him.
- It is also called a “central auditory processing disorder” or “auditory comprehension deficit”.
- In most cases, a child with a receptive language problem also has an expressive language disorder, which means he has trouble using spoken language.
- It is estimated that 3-5% of children have trouble understanding or expressing themselves, or both.
- The cause is unexplained in most cases.

What is “Understanding”?

- Understanding involves listening to someone talk and attaching meaning to what you hear.
- Listening and understanding are critical for success with learning, reading, writing, and speaking well.
- Being able to listen and understand are skills that develops gradually but there are things we can do to help the process.

Warning signs that your child may have trouble understanding include:

- Not answering when spoken to.
- Being easily distracted.
- Being over-active/high activity level.
- Being confused.
- Being “shy.”
- Having trouble following directions in the proper order or only finishing part of what you asked him to do. Following routine, repetitive directions may be fine.
- Repeating back words or sentences right away or at a later time.
- Inappropriate or off-topic answers to questions.
- Repeating a question back first and then answering it.
- Using “memorized” sentences (e.g., “To infinite and beyond!”)

When your child is having difficulty understanding, you need to get his hearing checked. This can be done by an Audiologist or an Ear, Nose, and Throat Doctor (ENT).

Reference: “Help Your Child Communicate by Improving Listening Skills” – Handout - Peel Preschool Speech and Language Program; http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Receptive_language_disorder? – Internet; <http://www.kidspeech.com/index.php?page=79> – Internet.