

## **ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?**

**Does your child sometimes seem to ignore what you have just said to them?**

Does your child act the class clown or get him or herself and others into trouble?

Perhaps you regularly ask your child to get you a few things from the shop and they consistently forget an item or bring the right number of things home but not the ones you asked for?

All of these examples could be due to your child having 'central auditory processing' (CAP) difficulties.

This term relates to a breakdown somewhere along the nerve pathways that take spoken information from the inner ear to the brain. Sounds enter our ear through the ear canal (outer ear). These sounds are made louder in the middle ear and then in the inner ear are changed into electrical impulses which are sent along the nerve pathways up to the brain. By the time the nerve impulses reach the brain, we have been able to put meaning onto the sounds we have heard.

Central auditory processing allows us to make sense of spoken instructions. It allows us to 'screen' the important auditory information (eg teachers giving instructions in the classroom) from the irrelevant information (eg traffic noise); to understand how spoken words can be broken up into individual sounds and the order in which the sounds are organised.

Intact central auditory processing also allows us to have an intact auditory short term memory. That is, the ability to keep spoken words in our memory long enough to analyse them, compare them and manipulate them.

Children who have central auditory processing difficulties typically find it difficult to understand long and complex sentences, particularly when there is some background noise present. This is seen very clearly in the classroom. They can be expected to miss or misunderstand parts of conversations or instructions.

Remember, children who have central auditory processing difficulties will often have normal hearing. What they have difficulty with, is making sense of these sounds, words and sentences.

An audiologist is the professional who tests for central auditory processing difficulties.

Speech pathologists usually see children with central auditory processing difficulties due to the significant negative effects this disorder can have on a child's listening, comprehension, reading and spelling.

if your child is diagnosed with central auditory processing difficulties, then these

suggestions should help your child in the classroom:

- sitting the child towards the front
- reducing or eliminating background noise and avoiding open plan classrooms
- providing extra visual clues (eg drawing a plan on the board or writing the information down)
- checking to see whether the child has understood your instructions