

(Central) Auditory Processing Difficulties

Information for parents of school aged children

What is (Central) Auditory Processing - (C)AP?

Put simply, auditory processing is what the brain does with what our ears hear. This is essential for learning and communication as it enables us to gain meaning from what we hear.

What are (Central) Auditory Processing Difficulties?

(C)AP difficulties occur when the brain has trouble understanding what our ears hear - even with normal hearing and learning ability. Approximately 3-5% of people are thought to have (C)AP difficulties. (Chermak and Musiek, 1998).

Consider the following teacher's instruction: "...before you turn to page 56 of your maths book, get out your spelling homework from yesterday and put it at the top of your desk for me to collect". Students who are able to remember more than one instruction at a time will do better in this case than those with (C)AP difficulties, where they may only catch the beginning or end of the sentence.



How do (C)AP difficulties present?

(C)AP difficulties affect people differently.

The most common characteristics are:

- * Difficulty listening well in background noise
- * A frequent need for clarification of information
- * Attention and concentration difficulties
- * Lengthy completion of school and homework
- * Academic potential not met
- * Sometimes, but not always, reading and spelling difficulties

What are the causes of (C)AP difficulties?

These include:

- i) chronic ear infection (which is often hard for the parent to detect particularly during the critical language development period of 0 to 4 years of age)
- ii) genetic factors
- iii) birth trauma
- iv) maturational delays

Can (C)AP difficulties be assessed and treated?

"Identifying (C)AP difficulties: First Steps" overleaf is a good start in helping you to determine if your child has (C)AP difficulties. To confirm this, however, assessment with a special set of research-based tools and technology is required. A (C)AP assessment should include a comprehensive case history, hearing screening, assessment of auditory processing in simulated listening environments, a test of processing speed and assessment of short term auditory memory.

The results of these assessments are then used to suggest how a child's specific learning needs and skills may be improved through changes in the listening environment, assistive technology, skill building for speech discrimination, short term memory and the use of written/visual aids.



How can I find out more about a (C)AP assessment, habilitation and family support?

Sonic Learning's (Central) Auditory Processing team includes speech pathologists, audiologists and an occupational therapist, who have specialist skills in assessing and treating (Central) Auditory Processing difficulties.

For more information on (Central) Auditory Processing difficulties or to book an appointment, please contact Sonic Learning on 9271 7711

Please turn over for further information on identifying and treating (C)AP difficulties.

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For more information on (C)AP difficulties contact:

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Identifying (C)AP Difficulties: First Steps

Prior to assessment for (C)AP difficulties, please consider how many identifying behaviors your child shows in daily life. If you tick 'sometimes' or 'frequently' to many of the behaviours listed below, referral for formal testing is recommended.

Behaviour	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Unsure
Appears inattentive				
Has poor 'listening' skills				
Is easily distracted or forgetful				
Noisy and disruptive				
Shy or has few friends				
Takes longer than expected to grasp new concepts				
Has little interest in reading or poor performance in comprehension and school exams				
Has difficulty concentrating				
Appears to be overly sensitive to loud noises				
Speaks too softly or loudly				

What can be done once (C)AP difficulties have been identified?

There is no one size fits all remedy for addressing (C)AP difficulties, yet a well tailored approach can be drawn from the following proven strategies:

1. In the Classroom

- seating which takes advantage of a child's listening strengths
- reduction of noise and echo in the room
- amplification systems: whole-class (sound field) or personal (FM)
- spoken information and requests modified for easy comprehension and memory
- frequent checks for understanding
- positive reinforcement

2. Skill Building

- Development of working memory, speechreading, auditory pattern recognition and auditory comprehension skills
- Enrolment in **Fast ForWord**: a computer based programme which trains auditory memory, attention, concentration, auditory processing, phonological awareness, vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Average gains include 1½ to 2 years improvement in auditory processing, receptive and expressive language and other foundation learning skills. For further information visit www.fastforwordAUSTRALIA.com.au

3. Compensatory Strategies

- Development of active listening skills and assertiveness
- Written information to assist with comprehension and memory

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