

I'm not a robot

























you or your child find it hard to hear or understand speech? The GP may refer you to a hearing specialist. Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) can significantly impact an adult's daily life, affecting their ability to understand and interpret sounds. Diagnosing APD in adults requires a comprehensive evaluation by audiologists and other specialists. A battery of tests is used to assess various auditory processes, including speech perception in noise, temporal processing, and binaural integration. The diagnostic process typically begins with a thorough case history and standard hearing tests to rule out conventional hearing loss. Specialized APD tests may include dichotic listening tasks, where different sounds are presented to each ear simultaneously, and temporal processing assessments that evaluate the ability to detect small gaps between sounds. These tests help identify specific areas of auditory processing difficulty. Recognizing the signs of auditory processing disorder in adults is vital for early intervention. Adults with APD may struggle to follow conversations in noisy environments, have difficulty understanding accented speech, or frequently misinterpret verbal instructions. A multidisciplinary approach involving audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and sometimes neurologists ensures a comprehensive evaluation and accurate diagnosis. The information here is meant for education and is not medical advice. Consult your healthcare provider for personalized recommendations. Key Takeaways APD diagnosis involves specialized tests assessing various auditory processing skills A multidisciplinary team of professionals is often involved in the diagnostic process Early recognition of APD symptoms can lead to timely intervention and management strategies Understanding Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) Auditory Processing Disorder affects how the brain interprets auditory information, impacting daily life and communication. It can occur in both children and adults, often presenting challenges in various settings. Definition and Impact of APD Auditory Processing Disorder, also known as Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), is a condition where individuals struggle to process and interpret auditory information despite having normal hearing sensitivity. The brain's ability to recognize and interpret sounds becomes impaired, leading to difficulties in understanding speech, especially in noisy environments. APD can significantly impact a person's quality of life, affecting academic performance, social interactions, and professional endeavors. Individuals with APD may find it challenging to follow conversations, comprehend complex instructions, or distinguish between similar sounds. Symptoms and Common Co-Occurrences Common symptoms of APD include: Difficulty following verbal directions Trouble understanding speech in noisy environments Frequent requests for repetition Delays in responding to verbal cues Problems with reading and spelling APD often co-occurs with other conditions such as ADHD and dyslexia. This overlap can complicate diagnosis and treatment. Individuals with APD may struggle with attention, reading comprehension, and phonological awareness. Social settings can be particularly challenging for those with APD, as they may misinterpret tone of voice or miss subtle cues in speech. Role of Audiologists in APD Audiologists play a crucial role in diagnosing and managing APD. They conduct specialized tests to assess auditory processing skills and differentiate APD from other hearing or learning disorders. The diagnostic process typically involves: Comprehensive hearing evaluations Specific auditory processing tests Assessment of speech perception in various listening conditions Audiologists collaborate with other professionals, such as speech-language pathologists and psychologists, to develop tailored treatment plans. These plans may include auditory training exercises, environmental modifications, and compensatory strategies to improve listening skills and overall communication abilities. Diagnostic Process and Interventions Diagnosing and treating Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) adults involves a comprehensive approach utilizing various tests and interventions. Audiologists and speech-language pathologists play key roles in assessment and management. Behavioral and electrophysiological tests evaluate an individual's ability to process auditory information. These may include dichotic listening tasks, temporal processing tests, and speech-in-noise assessments. Audiologists often use standardized test batteries to assess different aspects of auditory processing. Electrophysiological tests measure the brain's response to sound stimuli. The Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) evaluates the auditory pathway from the cochlea to the brainstem. Middle Latency Response (MLR) tests assess higher auditory pathways. These tests help identify specific deficits in the central auditory system and guide treatment planning. Advanced Imaging and Differential Diagnosis Advanced imaging techniques like MRI and fMRI may be used to examine brain structure and function. These can help identify or rule out other conditions that may cause similar symptoms. Differential diagnosis is crucial, as APD symptoms can overlap with other disorders. Audiologists consider factors such as hearing sensitivity, cognitive function, and language skills. They may collaborate with other specialists to rule out conditions like traumatic brain injury or age-related changes. A thorough case history and interdisciplinary approach ensure accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment planning. Treatment Options and Strategies Treatment for APD in adults often involves a combination of approaches: Auditory training programs to improve specific processing skills Compensatory strategies to enhance listening and communication Environmental modifications to optimize auditory input Assistive listening devices, such as FM systems or hearing aids with specialized features, can improve signal-to-noise ratios. Computer-based programs may target specific auditory skills. Speech-language pathologists may work on language and cognitive skills to support auditory processing. Strategies might include note-taking techniques or visual aids to supplement auditory information. Treatment plans are tailored to each individual's needs and may evolve over time based on progress and changing circumstances. Conclusion Diagnosing Auditory Processing Disorder in adults requires a comprehensive approach. A battery of specialized tests assesses various aspects of auditory processing and function. These evaluations, combined with a thorough case history and input from relevant professionals, help provide an accurate diagnosis. Early identification and proper diagnosis are crucial for developing effective management strategies. With appropriate interventions and support, adults with APD can improve their auditory processing skills and overall quality of life. Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), also called Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), is a disorder that impacts the ability to process incoming auditory information, such as speech. While it can affect both adults and children, Auditory Processing Disorder in adults can be less noticeable than in children. This article will cover the symptoms and possible causes of APD in adults, how it is diagnosed, treatment options, and practical tips to cope with APD. Common symptoms of APD disorder in adults include: Difficulty understanding and participating in conversation, especially in noisy environments: Louder settings, such as restaurants with many other competing conversations, can be challenging locations for adults with auditory processing disorder to converse with others. Difficulty multitasking: For example, an adult may struggle to attend to a phone conversation when there is background noise. Poor spelling skills and reading comprehension: This is a challenge that can begin in childhood and last through adulthood. Auditory processing disorder and reading difficulties are closely linked, as individuals with APD may struggle to distinguish similar sounds in words. Poor auditory memory: Adults with APD can have a hard time remembering incoming information long enough to write it down. Sensitivity to sound: Adults with auditory processing disorder may notice and be distracted by sounds that others do not seem to notice, such as the hum of fluorescent lights or a tapping pen. Difficulty interpreting nonverbal aspects of language: Individuals with APD may misinterpret sarcasm, humor, and tone of voice. Difficulty following spoken instructions: This may make it seem like adults with APD lack follow through or don't care, when in fact they may not understand or be able to attend to the instructions. Frequent need for repetition: Because they may not fully understand or be able to process incoming information, adults with auditory processing disorder may need to hear things multiple times in order to fully grasp them. This challenge often leads to hearing but not understanding, especially in noisy environments where distinguishing speech becomes even more difficult. Struggle with distinguishing similar sounds: Since each spoken word is made up of very specific sounds, and it's difficult identifying sounds in words means the individual with APD may hear a different word or sounds that aren't a word. This can lead to a misunderstanding or complete lack of understanding of spoken language. The cause of central auditory processing disorder in adults are not well known, but there are several potential causes: Genetics: It is suspected that auditory processing disorder may be passed down, although the specific genes have not yet been identified. Untreated hearing loss: When hearing loss is not treated, it can lead to poor auditory processing. It is important to note that individuals with APD do not necessarily have hearing loss. Related conditions: APD in adults is often associated with other health conditions such as multiple sclerosis, or other neurological conditions such as ADHD and dyslexia. Prenatal/neonatal factors: Prematurity, low birth weight, prenatal drug exposure, and other factors can lead to difficulty with auditory processing. Trauma to the brain: Any form of trauma to the brain can lead to auditory processing problems. This can include head injuries or anoxia (periods of oxygen not getting to the brain), which can happen during events such as strokes. Auditory processing disorder is diagnosed by an audiologist. The diagnosis of APD consists of several components. All of these steps combine to ensure a fully comprehensive picture of the individual's auditory and communication strengths and weaknesses. Key components of the diagnostic process include a case history, an audiological evaluation, and speech and language evaluation. A detailed case history is essential for identifying potential contributing factors and the scope of the problem. It should cover: Family history of hearing loss, auditory processing deficits, and communication difficulties Presence of any comorbid conditions, such as medical or cognitive disorders Linguistic and cultural background Speech and language development Educational and work history Auditory and communication difficulties The individual's experience with APD, including a variety of tests used in diagnosis. First, a hearing test is given to rule out any physical hearing loss or hearing impairment. Other tests may include the following: Auditory discrimination: one's ability to differentiate incoming auditory stimuli with different frequencies or intensities. Auditory temporal processing and patterning: assessment of one's ability to analyze acoustic stimuli over time, such as sequencing and patterns. Dichotic speech tests: assessment of one's ability to separate or combine unique auditory stimuli presented to each ear at the same time. Monaural low redundancy speech tests: assessment of one's ability to identify altered speech stimuli presented to one ear at a time, such as speech in noise. Binaural interaction tests: assessment of one's ability to process binaural acoustic stimuli (presented in both ears) that is dependent on differences in time or intensity. Electroacoustic measures: recordings of acoustic signals in the ear canal that are produced spontaneously or as a response to acoustic stimuli. Electrophysiological measures: recordings of electrical potentials that show activity created by the CNS (Central Nervous System) as a response to acoustic stimuli. These tests evaluate how the individual processes auditory stimuli. A speech language pathologist administers specific assessments related to the communication deficits that the individual is experiencing. This allows them to determine the impact of the auditory processing deficits on different aspects of language processing. As a helpful first step, try out our free APD test in order to help you understand if you should pursue further evaluation. It is important to consult specialists in order to be evaluated and determine if you have APD. While there is no cure for APD, there are a variety of options for auditory processing disorder treatment in adults. Adults with central auditory processing disorder can also employ coping strategies to help them manage their APD symptoms in daily life. Speech therapy can help adults who have auditory processing disorder in a couple ways. Speech therapists work on auditory training as well as teach compensatory strategies. For example, individuals may learn how to advocate for themselves by requesting clarification from a boss or come up with a system for taking notes to retain important information. Auditory training may include learning how to discriminate between speech and background noise. Speech therapists may help individuals improve their working memory or auditory memory by practicing repeating directions or series of numbers. Assistive listening devices such as FM listening devices help individuals with APD better hear speech in noisy environments. An FM device increases the volume of the speaker and sends it directly to the listener via a headset or earbuds without increasing the background noise. A digital voice recorder is an affordable option for recording important information or instructions. Forbrain is another tool that provides auditory feedback so that individuals can hear speech more clearly. These tools, along with other auditory processing disorder medical devices, can improve speech clarity and comprehension. Environmental modifications may need to be made. Adults with auditory processing disorder can set up their work or home environment to best suit their needs. Individuals may need to keep notepads and pens near the phone so they can write down information during phone calls. Using closed captioning when watching movies or television shows can also be helpful. Adults who work in an office may want to wear noise blocking headphones to eliminate distractions and improve focus. Coping strategies help adults with auditory processing disorder function optimally in their normal environments. Examples of coping strategies include: Lip reading: Using this can help individuals understand what is being said. In this case, one may opt for video calls versus phone calls. Self-advocacy: Adults with APD learn to advocate for themselves by asking people to repeat what they said. They also remind others to speak slowly, loudly, clearly, and in short sentences. Relocate: Individuals with APD may also learn to move to a quieter environment when they need to focus or have an important conversation. Forbrain is a tool that can benefit adults with auditory processing disorder. Forbrain is a bone-conduction headset equipped with a microphone that provides auditory feedback. It helps individuals with APD by amplifying the volume of speech and enhancing the speed with which the auditory input reaches the brain. This immediate feedback is especially helpful for improving auditory processing skills. It also improves auditory attention and helps individuals to hear and understand speech more clearly. Use our free APD test to determine if Forbrain may be helpful for you. Auditory processing disorder in adults impacts their daily lives in their social, home, and work environments. With proper evaluation and diagnosis, adults with APD can receive appropriate treatment and learn effective coping strategies. If you or someone you know struggles to process auditory information, take our APD test and use the tips in this article. Auditory Processing Center. (Accessed 2024, November 29). Adults with Auditory Processing Disorder (APD). Auditory Processing Center. ASHA. (Accessed 2024, November 10). Central Auditory Processing Disorder. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Source. ASHA. (2005). Technical Report: (Central) Auditory Processing Disorders - Working Group on Auditory Processing Disorders. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Source. Erickson, Kris. (2008, December 15). (CAPD Testing and Interpreting 101: Recommendations for Audiologists. Audiology Online. Karp, Melissa. (2023, March 5). Auditory Processing Disorder in Adults. VeryWell Health. Morgan, Danielle. (2024, May 13). A Guide on Auditory Processing Disorder. Audiologists. Rodden, Janice. (2024, April 8). What Does Auditory Processing Disorder Look Like in Adults? ADDitude. Source. Auditory processing disorder in adults isn't often discussed - usually the focus is on students and children with auditory processing disorder (APD). It's estimated that 2-5% of school aged children have auditory processing disorder [1]. For older adults, it's far higher - one study estimated 23-76% of older adults live with APD [2]. However, many young and middle aged adults exhibit auditory processing disorder symptoms too [1]. For an adult, APD can manifest itself in both life and work - such as having difficulty with telephone conversations, following complex directions, or struggling to learn a new language. But what is the difference between having a hearing problem and having APD? In this ultimate guide, you'll find out what APD is, what causes it, signs you may have APD, what test there is for APD, as well as available treatments. Difference between hearing problems and auditory processing disorder Auditory processing is about perceiving sounds correctly. Auditory processing difficulty isn't the same as hearing loss, and it's not related to intelligence. An individual with auditory processing disorder may very well have excellent hearing, and may very well have a high IQ. Auditory processing disorder is when a person cannot make sounds they hear to sounds they know. You know what the 'r' letter sounds like. However, due to processing issues in your brain, when you hear someone say a 'p' sound what you hear is a 'b' sound. A person with APD can have excellent hearing (their ears are sending the sound to their brain) but poor auditory processing (their brain doesn't match up the sounds properly). What causes Auditory Processing Disorder in Adults? There's a number of factors that could be the cause of auditory processing disorder [3], including: Genetics Neurological disorder, disease, or damage (such as brain injury, stroke or MS) Prenatal/neonatal factors (such being born prematurely) Age-related changes in the central auditory nervous system The last one is interesting. Auditory processing disorder in adults can be due to aging. Signs you may have auditory processing disorder As we mentioned, APD can manifest itself in both life and work. For example, you may: forget instructions misunderstand what's said be slow to respond, or drift off/tune out. Adults with auditory processing disorder aren't lazy. However, adults with APD more easily disengage from tasks because they have to work so much harder just to keep up. Is there an auditory processing disorder test for adults? Yes, there is. Tests for auditory processing disorder are administered by a qualified audiologist. After ruling out hearing deficits as a cause, an auditory processing assessment will assess your auditory processing skills. Online auditory processing disorder test People aged 5 and above who meet the eligibility requirements can enrol in our online auditory processing disorder test. You need an iPad to complete this test at home. The test is research validated and results are evaluated by professionals. So how do we treat auditory processing difficulties? Auditory Processing Disorder treatment involves 3 steps. Often though, step 3 (the most important step) is missing. Treatment for auditory processing disorder After Auditory Processing Disorder has been identified, most treatments focus on helping you cope with the problem. Strategies include: Compensating for the problem by changing the way you receive information. Some examples include: making up instructions checking for understanding providing writing aids. Changing the environment to make listening easier. Some examples include moving closer to the speaker (for example, sitting closer to the front at a seminar), reducing noise and echo, and amplifying the speaker's voice. While these coping strategies will make listening and learning a little easier, they will not fix the auditory processing problem - in fact, they're a bandaid. What will target the cause of auditory processing disorder? To target the cause of auditory processing disorder in adults, treatment must include this often missing step: Skill building - training the brain to process sound correctly and quickly. Yes, this is possible! But it requires actively training the brain to process sounds quickly and accurately, to pay attention when processing auditory information, and to remember that information. To achieve this, we use Fast ForWord, a program that's proven to improve many areas of auditory processing. Fast ForWord is designed to change the brain, re-wiring it for listening, attention, and memory. If you experience APD, feel free to book a free phone consult to discuss online training programs or request our comprehensive APD info pack. [1] Obuchi C, Ogané S, Sato Y, Kaga K. Auditory symptoms and psychological characteristics in adults with auditory processing disorders. J. Otol. 2017 Sep;12(3):132-137. doi: 10.1016/j.joto.2017.05.001. Epub 2017 May 15. PMID: 29937848; PMCID: PMC5963468. [PubMed] [2] Cooper J.C., Jr., Gates G.A. Hearing in the elderly-The Framingham cohort, 1983-1985: Part II. Prevalence of central auditory processing disorders. Ear Hear. 1991;12:304-311. [PubMed] [3] American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website. Central Auditory Processing Disorder Find out how to best help an adult or a student with APD, how to understand APD test results, and how Fast ForWord can help. Online auditory processing test Easy, cost-effective auditory processing test for people aged 5 and above. Research validated and evaluated by speech pathologists and audiologists. This free telephone consultation can help to answer any questions you have about our services. At Sonic Learning we are experienced teachers and health professionals so parents tend to find it very beneficial to be able to discuss their concerns and receive guidance from our team. When it comes to hearing tests of a standard hearing test, the results of a standard hearing test do not tell the whole story. The truth is, normal hearing test results do not always guarantee normal hearing. Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) is a condition that often goes undetected in traditional hearing tests, and it's easy to overlook. In fact, approximately 12% of adults with normal pure tone thresholds report significant hearing difficulties, which are frequently dismissed as insignificant issues when the results of a hearing test are "normal." An audiogram, which is the standard hearing test, assesses your ability to hear different pitches, but it doesn't examine how your brain processes sound. APD, on the other hand, stems from faulty neural pathways connecting your ears to the auditory processing centers in your brain. This affects the brain's ability to analyze and process sound effectively. Consequently, APD can have a profound impact on your ability to recognize subtle sound differences, comprehend and process speech efficiently, filter out background noises, and retain information you've heard. In many cases, APD can mimic hearing loss and have adverse effects on communication, learning, and social interactions, especially in noisy or multi-talker environments. So, if you're an adult with a normal or near-normal audiogram who struggles to understand speech, particularly when there's background noise, you might be dealing with a hidden auditory processing disorder. Testing Beyond the Surface for Real Insights Auditory processing evaluations go beyond standard hearing tests, assessing various auditory skills to examine your brain's ability to process sounds effectively. Our comprehensive evaluations are designed to pinpoint your specific processing deficits, providing crucial insights that guide the development of personalized treatment plans. It's important to note that auditory training can benefit individuals of all ages, regardless of their intellectual abilities, co-existing conditions, or audiogram results. Symptoms Adults with APD often experience: Difficulty understanding conversation. Challenges with conversation in noisy environments, such as restaurants. Trouble dividing attention (e.g., talking on the phone while tuning out background noise). Difficulty comprehending fast speech. Struggles with following and understanding without relying on lipreading or facial cues. Challenges with unfamiliar accents. Preference for high television volume and/or subtitles. Difficulty with teleconferences. Feeling exhausted from straining to follow conversations. Needing more time to process information heard compared to others. Difficulty remembering information long enough to write it down. Misinterpreting the intent behind a person's comments, such as sarcasm or tone of voice. Easily distracted by sounds that others don't notice, like tapping or pen clicking. Struggles with understanding music lyrics or distinguishing between melodies. Challenges with reading comprehension, both currently and in their earlier years. Auditory processing disorder can cause significant challenges in daily life, impacting more than just communication. The frustration from frequent misunderstandings can affect self-esteem and relationships. The constant effort needed to process sounds can lead to mental fatigue and decrease cognitive resources for other tasks, ultimately affecting workplace performance by making it difficult to filter distractions, multitask, and concentrate. People might avoid social gatherings due to the fear of feeling embarrassed, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. When they are unaware of the reasons behind their struggles, they may attribute their difficulties to personal failings or a lack of intelligence, potentially leading to depression. However, with the correct diagnosis and tailored treatment, adults can build confidence in listening and learning situations and reach their full potential. Complete our Free Online Questionnaire You can now complete our free online Adult Auditory Performance Scale to assess self-perceived listening abilities across multiple areas. This is a useful tool for evaluating self-perceived hearing problems to determine if you are at risk for a hidden auditory processing disorder. Click Here to Complete our Free Adult APD Symptoms Questionnaire. 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Overwhelmed by noisy environments? Our self-paced therapy programs are designed to help you thrive in challenging listening situations, one step at a time. Advantages of starting with self-paced therapy programs: Convenience: Work on your own schedule from the comfort of your home. Immediate Support: Start improving your auditory processing skills right away. Affordable: A cost-effective alternative to traditional therapy. Evidence-Based: Programs designed by experts in APD therapy. LACE AI Pro Auditory Processing Center is a licensed and certified LACE AI Pro clinic. LACE AI Pro is a self-administered program designed to enhance auditory training through listening exercises using artificial intelligence (AI) technology. It can be accessed from the comfort of your home through a mobile app, providing convenience and flexibility as you work through the listening exercises at your own pace. LACE AI Pro is backed by 20 years of research and is the only self-administered program designed to enhance auditory processing skills. The program features advanced capabilities and a modern interface designed to be easily accessible and engaging, using adaptive exercises that automatically adjust the difficulty as the listener progresses. Exercises include speech-in-noise practice, rapid speech exercises, auditory memory and working memory exercises, and speech-reading exercises, using a variety of content topics such as headline news, Bible trivia, and jokes. The program offers a one-time subscription for a lifetime membership with unlimited content to target key listening comprehension skills. Additionally, LACE AI Pro also supports multiple languages. It also now has a voice cloning feature that allows a specific talker, like a grandchild, to provide a sample of their speech, and the program will generate their voice for the activities. The avatar-driven feature is a personal trainer, guiding the listener to better listening comprehension abilities. The program includes a companion app for the user's significant others, allowing them to provide feedback. At this time, LACE AI Pro is only available in the United States. Interested in LACE AI Pro? Contact us for a free 7-day trial! APD SupportAD Support is an on-demand auditory training program developed by Angela Alexander designed to improve auditory skills at home. The program is based on Jack Katz's Buffalo Model Therapy and focuses on four key skill areas: phoneme training, phonemic synthesis, speech in noise, and auditory memory. It provides step-by-step training on phonemes to clarify unclear sounds, exercises to improve the blending of phoneme sequences through listening, auditory memory with working memory exercises, and activities to enhance word recognition in noisy environments. The APD Support On-demand training program is suitable for adults and children aged 12 and above who may not have access to in-person or virtual therapy due to cost or accessibility constraints. However, it's important to note that as a prerecorded curriculum while tuning out background noise. Difficulty comprehending fast speech. Struggles with following and understanding without relying on lipreading or facial cues. Challenges with unfamiliar accents. Preference for high television volume and/or subtitles. Difficulty with teleconferences. Feeling exhausted from straining to follow conversations. Needing more time to process information heard compared to others. Difficulty remembering information long enough to write it down. Misinterpreting the intent behind a person's comments, such as sarcasm or tone of voice. Easily distracted by sounds that others don't notice, like tapping or pen clicking. Struggles with understanding music lyrics or distinguishing between melodies. 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