

Hearing Testing for Children with Autism

Audiologic testing, or hearing testing, can often be successful—even when a child does not participate in traditional testing.

Families sometimes worry that their child will not tolerate or participate in a hearing test. There are several ways we can evaluate hearing that are flexible, quick, and designed to meet your child where they are. We have options beyond “sit still and raise your hand.”



TYMPANOMETRY



QUICK



OBJECTIVE



NO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
REQUIRED.

Tympanometry checks how the eardrum and middle ear are working. It gives information on the pathway sound travels to get to the inner ear.

- ▶ A small, soft tip is placed at the opening of the ear canal.
- ▶ The test takes only a few seconds per ear.
- ▶ Your child does not need to raise a hand, respond to sounds, or follow directions.
- ▶ It can often be completed while your child is sitting with you or engaged in another activity.
- ▶ Tympanometry can often be completed outside of a sound booth when a more comfortable environment is preferable.

OTOACOUSTIC EMISSIONS (OAEs)



QUICK



OBJECTIVE



NO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
REQUIRED.

OAEs measure the response of the inner ear to sound.

- ▶ A small probe is placed in the ear canal.
- ▶ Your child simply needs to tolerate the probe and brief sounds.
- ▶ No behavioral response is required.
- ▶ OAEs can often be completed outside of a sound booth when a more comfortable environment is preferable.



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VISUAL REINFORCEMENT AUDIOMETRY (VRA)



INTERACTIVE



PLAY-BASED



CHILD PARTICIPATES
AT THEIR LEVEL.

VRA is a behavioral hearing test designed for young children and children who may not be able to complete traditional testing.

- ▶ Your child listens for sounds.
- ▶ When they respond to a sound, they are rewarded with an interesting visual or animated toy.
- ▶ The test is gamified to make participation engaging.
- ▶ The audiologist adapts the approach based on your child's attention, communication style, sensory needs, and responses.
- ▶ Testing does not have to look like a traditional hearing test.



WHAT IF MY CHILD WILL NOT PARTICIPATE?

That is okay. We can start with what your child can tolerate.

We may:

- ▶ Begin with the quickest, least invasive tests.
- ▶ Allow your child to remain in a familiar position or with a caregiver.
- ▶ Take breaks as needed.
- ▶ Use toys, videos, or other motivating activities.
- ▶ Complete testing outside of the sound booth when appropriate.
- ▶ Adjust the order and approach based on your child's needs.
- ▶ Gather information over more than one visit if necessary.

There is no single “right” way to complete a hearing test. Participation does not have to be perfect to learn something about their hearing.