

Hearing Loss Among Children

FACT: About 1 in every 1,000 school-age children in metropolitan Atlanta has moderate to profound bilateral hearing loss (a loss of 40 decibels or more unaided in the better ear).

Hearing loss can affect a child's speech, language, cognitive, and psychosocial development. Treatment is most successful if the hearing loss is identified early—through newborn screening done during the first few months of life. For many children with hearing loss, the cause is unknown. The average lifetime cost associated with hearing loss is about \$417,000 per person (in 2003 dollars).



CDC's Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities Surveillance Program (MADDSP) is one of the few programs in the world that actively tracks the number of children with hearing loss in a large, diverse metropolitan area over time.

MADDSP tracks the number of school-age children living in five counties of metro Atlanta who have hearing loss, vision impairment, cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, and/or autism spectrum disorders. In 1996, an estimated 1.4 per 1,000 8-year-old children in metro Atlanta, or about 1 in 715, had hearing loss. In 2000, the prevalence was an estimated 1.2 per 1,000, or about 1 in 833, 8-year-olds. Nearly one quarter (2000) to one third (1996) of children with hearing loss also had one or more other developmental disabilities tracked by MADDSP.

MADDSP also allows CDC and other researchers to do special studies to identify risk factors for these disabilities and to find out whether efforts to prevent disabilities have been effective.

Related CDC Activities

- The Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities (MADDS) Follow-up Study of Young Adults followed a subset of children who had vision impairment, hearing loss, intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, and/or epilepsy to assess their current functioning and their transition to adulthood, as measured by employment, education after high school, and living arrangements. It also examined their mental and physical health and their lifestyles and behaviors.
- Collaboration between federal and state agencies and other organizations helps states and territories develop and implement Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Programs for newborn hearing screening.
- Using data from the National Health Interview Survey, researchers are examining health status and health care use among children with hearing loss.

To read more about CDC's publications related to hearing loss, visit www.cdc.gov/hearingloss.

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