



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Better Speech and Hearing

Better Speech and Hearing Month — May, 2009

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hearing loss is the number one birth defect in America, affecting approximately 12,000 newborns every year.

John Eichwald is an audiologist with CDC's National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. He's joining us today to discuss hearing loss and the importance of early intervention in newborns. Welcome to the show, John.

[John Eichwald] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] John, how early can hearing loss be detected?

[John Eichwald] Hearing loss can actually be detected within hours after birth, and we recommend that all infants be screened for hearing loss no later than one-month of age.

[Dr. Gaynes] How is hearing loss detected in a newborn?

[John Eichwald] There are a couple of different technologies that are used. In one technology, we check the brain's response to sound and in the other technology we actually check the ear's response to sound. These technologies are safe, quick, and totally painless for the baby.

[Dr. Gaynes] John, what are the main causes of hearing loss in children?

[John Eichwald] We know that about half of all hearing loss in children can be inherited. We also know that about a third of hearing loss is caused by diseases and environmental causes, and then the rest of them, we're really not quite sure what the cause is.

[Dr. Gaynes] If an infant is diagnosed with hearing loss, what treatments or interventions are available?

[John Eichwald] In some cases, hearing loss can be medically treatable. In other cases, we look at using hearing aides, cochlear implants, or other treatments, such as speech-language therapy or sign language.

[Dr. Gaynes] John, what are the benefits of early diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss?

[John Eichwald] When a child is diagnosed at a young age and appropriate treatment is begun, the child has a better chance to develop language and improve their social skills and academic achievement.

[Dr. Gaynes] If not discovered and treated early, what problems can hearing loss cause, later in life?

[John Eichwald] There's a critical period early in an infant's life to develop language, and if we don't diagnose hearing loss early and begin that treatment early, we can miss that critical language period.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about hearing loss in infants?

[John Eichwald] Listeners can go to www.cdc.gov and type in the words "early hearing" in the search box.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks John. I've been talking today with CDC's John Eichwald about the importance of early intervention for newborn hearing loss.

Remember parents, have your infant's hearing checked by one month of age. If a problem is detected early, your child can get intervention services to improve their speech, language, social skills, and academics.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.