



## July focuses on Hearing Impairments

Hearing impairment is the decreased ability to hear and discriminate among sounds. It is one of the most common birth defects. Each year in the United States, about 12,000 babies (3 in 1,000) are born with some degree of hearing impairment. Hearing impairment that is present at birth is called congenital hearing impairment. Hearing impairment also can develop later in childhood or during adulthood.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all babies be screened for hearing impairment before 1 month of age, preferably before they leave the hospital after birth. This is because language and communication develop rapidly during the first 2 to 3 years of life, and undetected hearing impairment can lead to delays in developing these skills. Without newborn screening, children with hearing impairment often are not diagnosed until 2 to 3 years of age.

The goal of early screening, diagnosis and treatment is to help children with hearing impairment develop language and academic skills equal to those of their peers. Most states have an Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program to help ensure that all babies are screened, and that infants who do not pass the screening receive the follow-up care they need. The March of Dimes, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the CDC and others strongly support these programs.

Hearing impairment can be genetic (inherited) or non-genetic. Non-genetic causes include illness or injury before, during or after birth. In some cases, the cause of hearing impairment is not known. About 90 percent of babies with congenital hearing impairment are born to parents with normal hearing. Genetic factors are believed to cause 50 percent of cases of hearing impairment in infants and young children.

For more information about Hearing Impairments visit [http://www.marchofdimes.com/birthdefects\\_hearing.html](http://www.marchofdimes.com/birthdefects_hearing.html), the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)\* webpage at <http://www.pica.army.mil/mwr/ACS/EFMP.htm> or contact the EFMP Manager, Marci Keck, at 973-724-2145 or [marci.keck@us.army.mil](mailto:marci.keck@us.army.mil).

*\*The Department of Defense EFMP is a mandatory enrollment program that works with other military and civilian agencies to provide comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, and educational, medical, and personnel services to Families with special/exceptional needs.*