

Movies and Babies Don't Mix

Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists are very concerned about the sound levels in theatres, especially matinee sessions held for parents and their young children.

Sound levels in movie theatres are often too loud for comfort. It has been demonstrated that sound mixing levels are controlled to increase the impact of sudden noises during the show. The movie industry argues that the average level of noise exposure for someone attending a 2-hour movie would not necessarily exceed the safety level. However, people attending movies are subjected to sudden short bursts of very high-level noises (gun fire, explosions, screeching tires etc.). Trailers or previews are particularly loud. These short bursts of high impact noise are the problem.

Medical research has shown that infants subjected to sudden loud impact noises are affected negatively. The environmental set ups of Intensive Care Nurseries are now being monitored and modified to create a quiet environment. As an example, the babies' heart rate decreases as soon as they are moved to a quieter environment; their breathing slows down and they have a tendency to be more relaxed and to heal faster. Thus research suggests that a young infant cannot attend a two-hour movie without potentially being negatively affected by the loud sounds.

Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists in Canada are very concerned about the hearing health of infants. Several provinces, including, Alberta New Brunswick and Ontario, currently offer newborn infant hearing screening programs to detect hearing disorders in infants. Together with the support of pediatricians and hundreds of dedicated nurses employed in the hospital nurseries, a great majority of infants born in Canada are now screened for hearing loss prior to discharge. Our goal is simple: to detect a hearing loss and intervene before the child reaches 6 months of age

The excessively noisy environment of a movie theatre could have a negative impact on your infants' hearing health. Parents who do choose to take their infant or toddler to a movie are urged to make every effort to protect their children's hearing and/or to ensure that they ask the operator to turn down the volume!

" An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!"