

Inquiring, sometimes confused facial expression
Suspicious alertness alternating with cooperation
Frequent stubbornness because of lack of comprehension
Irritability at not making themselves understood
Shy, timid, and withdrawn behavior
Frequent appearance of being “in a world of their own” or markedly inattentive

Children who are profoundly hearing impaired are much more likely to be diagnosed during infancy than the child who is less severely affected. If the defect is not detected during early childhood, it likely will become evident during entry into school, when the child has difficulty learning. Unfortunately, some of these children are erroneously placed in special classes for students with learning disabilities or CI. Therefore, it is essential that the nurse suspect a hearing impairment in any child who demonstrates the behaviors listed in [Box 18-4](#).

Nursing Alert

When parents express concern about their child's hearing and speech development, refer the child for a hearing evaluation. Absence of well-formed syllables (*da, na, yaya*) by 11 months old should result in immediate referral.

During early childhood, the primary importance of hearing impairment is the effect on speech development. A child with a mild conductive hearing loss may speak fairly clearly but in a loud, monotone voice. A child with a sensorineural defect usually has difficulty in articulation. Communication may be difficult, leading to frustration when words are not understood. For example, an inability to hear higher frequencies may result in the word *spoon* being pronounced “poon.” Children with articulation problems need to have their hearing tested.