

HYPERACUSIS, SOUND ANNOYANCE AND LOUDNESS HYPERSENSITIVITY IN CHILDREN

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Objective: Estimate hyperacusis prevalence among school-aged children and related risk factors.

Methods: Questionnaires, interviews and Loudness Discomfort Levels were administered to 506 children from 5 to 12 years of age from 15 different schools. We classified subjects as having loudness hypersensitivity if that had LDLs in the lowest 5th percentile, as experiencing Annoyance to sounds if they: (1) reported that they were bothered by sounds (“Are you bothered by any kind of sounds or noise?”) and being able to describe this sound, and were able to identify at least 10 sounds from a list of 20 as being annoying. We defined hyperacusis as having loudness hypersensitivity and experiencing bothersome sounds. We define phonophobia as a fear of sound.

Results: We observed that children in the lowest 5th percentile typically had LDLs lower than 90 dBHL. 42% of the sample was bothered by sounds. Hyperacusis occurred in 3.2% of this sample. Tinnitus was a concomitant finding in 50% of the cases with hyperacusis and mild hearing loss on left ear was an associated risk factor. Phonophobia was experienced by 5 children with hyperacusis.

Conclusion: Hyperacusis in children is prevalent, and it should be considered in clinical examinations.

Keywords: Hyperacusis, Tinnitus, Loudness Annoyance, Children, Cross-Over Study