Hearing problems in very young children may not become obvious until they are between 12 and 18 months, when they should begin to say their first words. Signs of hearing loss in infants may be very subtle and not so easy to notice. That’s because young kids may mask their hearing issues by using other senses, such as touch and sight, to interact with the world around them.

But you can look for clues. According to the American Academy of Audiology, an infant with normal hearing should be able to:

Around 2 months:
• startle to loud noise (such as a cough, a bark or a hand-clap)
• calm down, even for a few seconds, when a familiar voice is heard (such as the mother’s voice)

Around 4 months:
• look for the source of sounds
• start babbling, squealing and chuckling

Around 6 months:
• turn his or her head toward loud sound
• begin to imitate speech sounds
• babble (dada, baba, gaga) at least four different sounds
• enjoy ringing bells or noisemakers

Around 9 months:
• imitate speech sounds
• understand “bye-bye”, or “no”
• turn the head toward soft sounds or the calling of his or her name

Around 12 months:
• correctly use “mama” or “dada”
• follow easy commands
• respond to music or singing

If your child is not meeting any of these milestones, he/she should be checked for hearing problems by a physician.