

# Visual Inspection

## Ages

All ages

## Purpose

To check for signs of ear disease or abnormal development

## Description

A systematic inspection of the external ear canal, surrounding tissue, ear canal, and tympanic membrane

## Equipment

*External inspection:* Adequate lighting

*Internal inspection:* Otoscope\*

## Procedure

*External:* Inspect the pinna and the area around it for any abnormalities such as preauricular sinuses, skin tags, or atresia; check for position (set or tilt) of the ears, tenderness, redness or edema, signs of drainage, foul odor, wax build-up in the outer ear canal, or dermatitis. Refer to the MDH Otoscopy and Tympanometry Manual for pictures and more information.

*Internal:* With the otoscope\*, inspect the ear canal and tympanic membrane for signs of drainage, wax buildup, foreign bodies, redness of the ear canal, and other abnormalities; note presence or absence of normal tympanic membrane landmarks.

## PASS

Children with normal appearance of all structures and no complaints of pain in the pinna or the tissue around the ear do not require referral.

## REFER

Refer children with any abnormality to a medical provider. *Do not* proceed with audiometer screening if tenderness, signs of drainage, or foul odor is present; this should be an automatic referral.

## HEARING SCREENING - VISUAL INSPECTION

\*If the screener has training and experience in using an otoscope. If the screener lacks training and experience in using an otoscope, the visual inspection should be limited to the external aspect of the ears.



Maternal Child Health section  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

For questions about this document or to obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-3760 or email [health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us](mailto:health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us).

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