



# How to talk with your baby

## *Birth - 18 Months*

### **Introduction**

Here are some guidelines to help you check your baby's speech and language development. You will also find some ways that you can stimulate your child's speech and language at different ages.

### **From birth to six months of age most babies will:**

- Startle or cry when hearing loud or different noises.
- Make a variety of different sounds, e.g. coos, gurgles, and cries.
- Respond to you by listening, looking, smiling, and making sounds.
- Usually stop crying when someone talks to them in a soothing voice.

- Make sounds back to you when you talk to them.

### **What you can do to help your baby communicate:**

- Talk to, hold and cuddle your baby.
- Give your baby a chance to communicate back to you with smiles and sounds.
- Interact with your baby. Copy the movements, faces and sounds your baby makes.
- Use different kinds of faces, voices and playful sounds when you are with your child.
- Talk to and sing to your baby while doing a variety of daily activities such as feeding, diapering, bathing and when travelling.

## From six to 12 months of age most babies will:

- Respond to their name and understand simple words like “up”, “bye-bye”, “Daddy”, “hot” and “no”.
- Understand simple sentences and questions like “Get the ball” or “Where’s Mommy?”
- Make sounds, babble a lot and may try singing along with you. Imitate your actions, e.g. clapping and banging toys.
- Imitate your sounds, e.g. coughs, kisses and tongue clicks.
- Communicate with you by pointing, reaching and making sounds.
- Enjoy repeating the sounds they make.
- Try to use a word or two.

## What can you do to help your baby communicate:

- Use short sentences such as “Baby go out” and “All gone” when you talk with your baby.
- Watch to see how your baby responds.
- Use picture books that have large, simple, colourful pictures and few words. Talk about what you see.
- Play singing and action games like “patty cake” and “peek a boo.”
- Give your baby a chance to copy what you do.
- Copy the actions and sounds your baby uses.
- Use the same words over and over again so it is easier for your baby to learn them.

## From 12 to 18 months of age most babies will:

- Point to pictures of common objects, people and animals.
- Play with toys and objects in a practical way, e.g. use a comb to comb a doll’s hair.
- Use gestures, sounds and some single words to let you know what they want.

- Jabber a lot.
- Recognize the names of various parts of the body when you say them e.g. hair, mouth and eyes.
- Use five to 50 single words.

## What you can do to help your baby communicate:

- Add to the words your baby uses, e.g. If your baby says “car” you could say “Car go” or “Bye-bye car” or “Big car” or “Car all gone.”
- Look at books together and talk about the pictures.
- Look at the same books many times because repetition helps children learn. Let the child choose his favourites.
- Talk out loud about what you are doing. Use simple phrases to describe what you are thinking, doing and seeing.
- Talk out loud about what your child is doing, looking at, playing with or feeling. e.g. If your child is playing with pots on the floor you could say “Big pots” or “Bang, bang” or “You’re making lots of noise.”
- Say one to two sentences at a time and pause to give her time to better understand what you are saying.
- Treat your child’s attempts at communicating as meaningful. Children this age often have unclear speech and make up their own words.

**If you are concerned about your child’s speech and language development, or would like more information, please contact the speech-language pathologist or public health office in your region.**