

# Normal Language Development

## Community Paediatric Audiology Service



Language develops unconsciously and automatically, triggered by parents talking and communicating with their baby.

Babies are “pre-programmed” to develop the necessary skills in a predictable order. Similarly, parents are “programmed” to communicate with their baby in a particular way, e.g., “baby-talk”.

Parents believe from birth that their baby is capable of communicating with them, so interpret their baby’s behaviour as meaningful and communicative. As a consequence, the infant quickly learns that they can affect the way the parent responds towards them.

Example:

- Baby feels uncomfortable and cries.
- Parent interprets crying as “I’m hungry”.
- Parent feeds baby.
- Baby learns to cry for what they need.

This sets in motion a cycle of behaviours and responses between the parent and child. These change and develop as your child grows. This enables the parent to encourage, model and guide their child towards successful communication.

Pics on pgs 3-6



The following is intended as a general guide only. Remember, individual children acquire language skills at different rates, some variation is normal.

### **0-1 month**

- **hears all sounds**
- cries when hungry or uncomfortable
- some vowel-like sounds produced
- NOT speech-like or intentionally communicative

### **2 months**

- **vocal behaviour paired with social interaction**
- prefers and responds to parent's voice

### **3 months**

- **vocalises with pleasure or when active – squeals, yells, blows raspberries**
- long strings of vowel or consonant sounds associated with activity
- cries when uncomfortable or annoyed
- quietens to parent's voice

### **6 months**

- **vocalises to self and others – vowel-sounds, sing-song quality**
- begins to recognise emotional tones
- looks to parent's voice
- prefers to listen to "baby-talk"
- begins to self-monitor own vocalisation

## **9 months**

- vocalises to communicate
- shouts for attention
- produces strings of tuneful babble, imitates sounds
- attends to others talking
- understands “no” and “bye-bye”
- learning communication signals
- gesture e.g., waving goodbye, shaking head for “no”, reaching up to be picked up
- eye contact
- facial expressions

## **12 months**

- jargon and intonation with speech-like quality
- enjoys imitating and turn-taking
- knows own name
- understands several words and simple instructions used in context
- producing consonant-vowel sounds, which will develop into words e.g., mama, dada

## 15 months

- **very vocal**
- 2 – 6 recognisable words, understands many more
- communicates wishes and needs with vocalisations and gestures

## 18 months

- **very vocal**
- uses 6 – 20+ words
- copies words and sentences
- attends when spoken to
- enjoys nursery rhymes

## 24 months

- **uses 50+ words**
- 2+ word sentences
- refers to self by name
- produces long monologues (variable intelligibility)
- joins in nursery rhymes and songs

## 30 months

- **uses 200+ words**
- talks intelligibly, stuttering common
- constant questions
- enjoys story books
- some pronunciation and sentence errors

### 3 years

- **large vocabulary, intelligible speech**
- simple conversation
- many questions
- repeats nursery rhymes
- some pronunciation and sentence errors

### 4 years

- **speech intelligible and grammatically correct**
- conversation about recent events
- many questions
- repeats rhymes and songs correctly
- starting to count

### 5 years

- **fluent speech**
- asks meanings of words
- enjoys rhymes and jingles
- enjoys stories
- enjoys jokes and riddles
- some confusions common
  - th-f-s



## For further information about this service contact:

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