

## Talking to Your Child

Babies practice "talking" almost from the birth. Even if they don't say words, they are practicing sounds they need later to say words. The more you talk to babies and children, the faster they will learn.

Here is the usual pattern for speech development.

<b>At this age...</b>	<b>your child....</b>
1-2 months	Coos; bubbles; makes a "raspberry"; turns head to sound.
6-12 months	Babbles (repeats same sounds over and over) – "mamamama," "dadadadada," "lalalala"; responds to own name; laughs; squeals; shakes head "no"; plays peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake when told.
12 months	Says "mama" and "dada" plus 1-2 other words (i.e. hi, bye); understands "no"; recognizes his own name.
18-20 months	Uses at least 15-20 words; points to simple body parts when named (eyes, mouth, ears).
2 years	Uses 50 words and 2-3 word sentences - "me go," "all gone," "want cookie"; follows simple commands such as "Bring mommy the ball"; refers to self by name; points to pictures when named. You can understand his speech half of the time.
2-1/2 years	Uses 3-4 word sentences "me want cookie"; asks simple questions; names simple objects (spoon, cup).
3 years	Tells his full name; uses plural; matches some colors; names one color; sings songs; tells stories; counts 3 things; asks "what" and "when" questions. You can understand him 3/4 of the time.
4 years	Can say his name and age; uses 4-5 word sentences; ask "who" and "why" questions a lot. You can understand most of what he says.
5 years	Says address; knows 4 colors; speaks 5-6 word sentences; tells opposites; call tell a basic story.

### So how can I help him develop his language?

Talking to your child is important for him to learn to talk and communicate. During play and daily activities, talk about what he is doing, where he is, who is with him, how he feels and his surroundings.

- Reading to your child as a baby helps build his talking skills. Use baby books with colorful pictures and few words. As he grows older, read him nursery rhymes, pop-up-books, and books with surprise endings. Let your child pick out books he wants to read. Point to pictures and talk about them. As he gets older, talk about what may happen next before your turn the page.

- Imitate the sounds your child makes such as cooing, animal sounds, singing, and pretend words.
- While driving in the car or waiting for the bus, talk about things you see. For example, "I see a big, yellow bus!" "Let's count the red cars that go by."
- Use gestures and movements as you sing. Use songs like "Pat-a-cake"; "peek-a-boo"; "itsy-bitsy spider"; and other nursery rhymes with actions.
- Use short, simple sentences when talking to your child. Look at your child when you are talking to him. Be sure to look at him when he is talking to you.
- Repeat the words your child says and add to them. For example, your child says, "ball". You can say, "big ball" or use the word in a sentence. Such as, "I see a red ball."
- Play animal imitation games, make funny faces and movements.
- Encourage pretending. Describe what the child does, especially action words. "You are stirring." "You are driving."
- Talk about body parts during his bath and while dressing him.
- It is important for children to be able to imitate adults. Talk the way you want your child to talk. Talk slowly and clearly. Be sure that there is quiet time every day in the house. Turn off the TV and music to focus on talking to each other.

**Talk to your child's doctor if:**

- Your child does not turn his head to sounds at 6 months.
- Your child has no words at 14 months.
- Your child's speech at 30 months is hard to understand.
- Your child always talks in a loud voice
- Your child does not come or respond when you call his name.