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supporting families to raise children



**Families NSW**  
Communication Strategy for Parents  
and Carers Project Northern Sydney |  
South East Sydney | South West Sydney

# LOVE Talk SING Read PLAY

Ideas to make the most of my child's early development.



## 0-2 months

### What is my baby learning to do?

- ▶ Smile and laugh
- ▶ Listen to voices
  
- ▶ Kick legs
- ▶ Eating and sleeping patterns

### Seek further advice if your baby:

- ▶ Seems floppy or stiff
- ▶ Cries a lot
- ▶ Arches his/her back a lot
- ▶ Isn't responding to sounds
- ▶ Isn't showing interest or listening when played with
- ▶ Isn't feeding as expected

See your Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

## How can I make the most of this time?

### Love

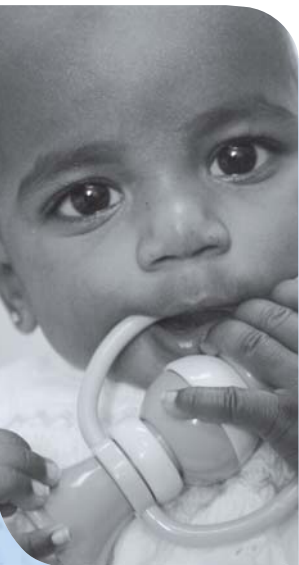
- ▶ Cuddle and kiss your baby. Babies love to be held. You can't spoil your baby by giving too much attention.
- ▶ Babies cry because they need something. They may be hungry, tired, scared, sick, need to be held or need a nappy change. If you comfort them when they cry, they will learn that the world is safe and cry less. Spend time getting to know what your baby's different cries mean.
- ▶ Look at your child's face while they look at you as this helps bonding and helps brain development.
- ▶ Try to develop routines for baths and sleep about the same time every day.

### Talk, Sing, Read

- ▶ Babies are learning from the moment they are born. Most brain development happens in your baby's first three years.
- ▶ Respond to your baby's sounds. Smile and talk back. Babies would rather listen to your voice than anything else.
- ▶ Sing or say the same rhyme each bedtime. Lullabies can help soothe and help him/her sleep.

### Play

- ▶ From birth, children are keen to learn about their world by playing.
- ▶ Hold your baby's hand and let him/her grip your finger.
- ▶ Softly stroke your baby and gently move his/her arms and legs up and down when he/she is happy on his/her back.



## 2-6 months

### What is my baby learning to do?

- ▶ Sleep less
- ▶ Interact more
- ▶ Sit with support
  
- ▶ Raise head and chest when lying on stomach
- ▶ Roll both ways from stomach to back
- ▶ Reach for dangling objects
- ▶ Grasp and shake objects
- ▶ Respond to their name
- ▶ Be happy to see faces they know
- ▶ Copy sounds
- ▶ Learn social skills

### Seek further advice if your baby:

- ▶ Isn't learning to make sounds
- ▶ Isn't responding to familiar faces
- ▶ Isn't learning to roll when playing on floor

See your Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

## How can I make the most of this time?

### Love

- ▶ Babies thrive best when those around them are happy and calm.
- ▶ Value yourself and what you can do. Ask for help from family, friends and services when needed.
- ▶ Show your baby you love him/her with smiles, kisses, hugs and let him/her touch your face.

### Talk, Sing, Read

- ▶ Tell your baby about what you are planning to do, such as, "I'm going to pick you up." This helps him/her feel comfortable with what is happening.
- ▶ When your baby babbles, talk and babble back.
- ▶ Your baby will copy you sticking out your tongue. You can copy things your baby does too.
- ▶ Involve your family in talking with the baby.
- ▶ Read to your baby each night while holding him/her in your lap. He or she will learn that reading is 'feeling good' time.

### Play

- ▶ Babies learn from watching others, holding and putting their mouths on different things. Offer your baby new objects. Don't let them have anything that could fit entirely in their mouth. Let your baby play with your fingers and explore the breast or bottle during feeds.
- ▶ Offer your baby one toy at a time so he/she can focus on and explore each one. Good choices include a small rattle with a handle, a rubber ring, a soft doll and a board book with pictures. Hold out a toy, encourage your baby to reach and grab it, then signal to give it back. You will start to see what interests him/her most.
- ▶ Give your baby time to copy you, for example, push a button on a toy and wait for your baby to do it before you do it again. This teaches him/her that he/she can make things happen and this builds confidence.
- ▶ Place your baby in different positions on the floor so that he/she can look at many things and explore in different ways.



## 6-12 months

### What is my baby learning to do?

- ▶ Sit without support
- ▶ Crawl on hands and knees and pull to stand
- ▶ Take steps holding onto furniture and walk with one hand held
- ▶ Pick up and throw small objects
  
- ▶ Hold a spoon or cup and attempt to self feed or drink
- ▶ Be scared of strangers or objects
- ▶ Look for objects that have fallen and find a hidden object
- ▶ Repeat sounds and gestures
- ▶ Respond to own name being called
- ▶ Say words like "dada" or "mama"
- ▶ Wave goodbye

### Seek further advice if your baby:

- ▶ Isn't responsive to carers
- ▶ Isn't babbling and making different sounds
- ▶ Isn't beginning to sit, crawl or pull to stand
- ▶ Isn't playing with feet or swapping objects between hands
- ▶ Isn't interested in holding toys
- ▶ Isn't learning to eat solids

See your Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

## How can I make the most of this time?

### Love

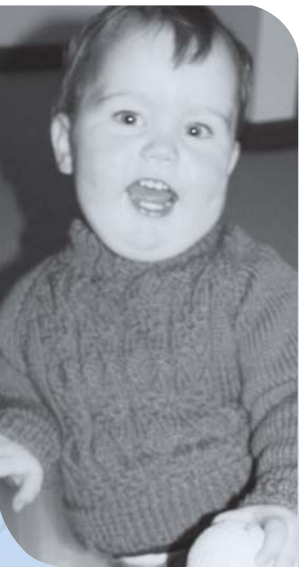
- ▶ Your child may change from being friendly with everyone to wanting to cling to you and being scared of strangers. This is normal. Stay calm; provide comfort and reassurance for your child. If you are leaving your baby for a while, say goodbye and let him/her know that you will be back.
- ▶ Your child may also start to play briefly on his/her own, but he/she still needs you close by.
- ▶ Face your child so that he/she can watch your expressions to learn about them.

### Talk, Sing, Read

- ▶ Use meal times for the family to talk. Encourage your child to hold food, cups, spoons, etc.
- ▶ Name things as you use them and tell your children what is going on, such as, "You're eating yummy rice!" Give him/her time to respond.
- ▶ When your baby makes a sound, imitate it and continue with this back and forth, like a conversation.
  
- ▶ Night time routines can include looking at books together. You can point to pictures in board books and name the things you see.
- ▶ You can show your child small plastic photo albums of family and friends and help your child to touch the pictures.
- ▶ Sing, play songs and nursery rhymes throughout the day.

### Play

- ▶ Play games that have songs and actions together or involve turn taking. Play games like 'peek-a-boo', clapping hands or dropping toys into a bucket. Hide toys under a bowl and let your baby find them.
- ▶ He/she will also start to use toys in more complex ways, such as pouring water with a cup or throwing food on the floor (he/she is learning new important skills, not trying to be naughty).
- ▶ Provide safe toys for bath time play – containers, rubber toys, plastic books.
- ▶ Your baby is developing his/her motor skills, such as getting a ball that rolled away.
- ▶ You can find out about joining a playgroup, a library and toy library near you.



## 1-2 years

### What is my child learning to do?

- ▶ Walk, climb and run
- ▶ Kick and throw a ball
- ▶ Follow simple instructions
- ▶ Feed themselves
- ▶ Scribble with a pencil or crayon
- ▶ Say their first name
  
- ▶ Begin to cooperate when playing
- ▶ Follow simple instructions
- ▶ Point to objects when named
- ▶ Know some body parts
- ▶ Say many words and begin to join words with meaning
- ▶ Your child might be anxious about separating from you

### Seek further advice if your child:

- ▶ Isn't using words or actions to communicate such as waving or raising arms up to be lifted
- ▶ Isn't wanting to move around
- ▶ Isn't responding to others
- ▶ Isn't seeking the attention of familiar people

See your Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

## How can I make the most of this time?

### Love

- ▶ Spend time with your child doing something that your child likes so they know that you are interested.
- ▶ This is a time where children may assert their feelings and wishes and become fussy about foods or refuse to do what you ask. Encourage but do not force your child to eat. Teach simple rules about behaviour and have reasonable expectations.
- ▶ Help your child to dress, wash their hands and use the toilet when they are ready for these changes.
- ▶ Take your child to explore in a garden or a park and talk to them about what you see.

### Talk, Sing, Read

- ▶ Tell your child the name of objects and then ask, "What's that?"
- ▶ Sing simple songs with finger movements. Sing along and dance with them to children's CDs. Play them at home or in the car.
- ▶ Offer your child thick crayons and paper to scribble on.
  
- ▶ Read stories that are predictable, with only a few words on each page or which have simple rhymes. Let him/her turn the pages. They love sturdy board books they can carry.
- ▶ Make story time part of your bedtime routine.

### Play

- ▶ Your child may love to explore new things and needs your approval to do that.
- ▶ Your child may enjoy being with others who have time to spend playing, such as grandparents, friends or other children.
- ▶ Help your child to learn how to take turns and how to share when playing.
- ▶ Your child will love to use his/her imagination. He/she may like pretend play, such as feeding teddy bears or dolls. A box of old clothes can be used for playing 'dress ups'. A sheet over a couple of chairs can be a fun place to hide.



## 2-3 years

### What is my child learning to do?

- ▶ Walk, run, climb, kick and jump easily
- ▶ Recognise and identify common objects and pictures by pointing
- ▶ Use two or three words together, such as, "go potty now"
- ▶ Say his or her name and age when asked
- ▶ Use a pencil to draw or scribble in circles and lines
  
- ▶ Play with other children
- ▶ Get dressed with help
- ▶ Use make believe and pretend play
- ▶ Self-feed using utensils and a cup
- ▶ Ask lots of questions
- ▶ Copy words and actions
- ▶ Make music, sing and dance
- ▶ Like listening to stories and books
- ▶ Begin to count with numbers
- ▶ Recognise similarities and differences

### Seek further advice if your child:

- ▶ Isn't interested in playing
- ▶ Falling a lot
- ▶ Finds it hard to use small objects
- ▶ Isn't understanding simple instructions
- ▶ Isn't using many words
- ▶ Isn't joining words in meaningful phrases
- ▶ Isn't interested in food
- ▶ Isn't interested in others

See your Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

## How can I make the most of this time?

### Love

- ▶ Your child is learning to be more independent, but still needs you there encouraging them.
- ▶ Your child is also learning about feelings and how to express them. You can encourage him/her to name what they are feeling at different times. Talk to your child about feelings and behaviour, for example, "I understand you were feeling angry, but you cannot hit your friend."
- ▶ Tell your child that you love them and give specific praise often. Do this at various times, so they know they are special just for being themselves.
- ▶ Spend time together doing things he/she likes to do such as kicking a ball or playing dress-ups.

### Talk, Sing, Read

- ▶ Share your stories and listen to your child's stories, they are learning about you and the world around them. Take walks with your child holding hands. Talk about what you see around you.

- ▶ Children this age enjoy books with simple stories and simple rhymes they can memorise. They also like books about counting, the alphabet, shapes and sizes, animals or trucks and books about saying hello and goodbye.

### Play

- ▶ Children learn by playing and playing with your child builds close bonds between you.
- ▶ Create a safe home where your child can explore.
- ▶ He/she may love playing with balls or playing on playground equipment, splashing in a pool or at the beach.
- ▶ Playing with play dough, sand and mud offer different play experiences.

### Tantrums

Tantrums are common and normal around this age. Ensure that your child has enough rest, food and water throughout the day to avoid tantrums. Little tantrums are best ignored. Wait until the tantrum ends then speak to your child about how they were feeling and how else they could have done things. Try to stop their feelings getting out of control by helping them to relax, talking about why they are upset, or distracting them with a toy. It is important that you stay calm and in control.



## 3-5 years

### What is my child learning to do?

- ▶ Speak in sentences and use many different words
  - ▶ Understand opposites (big/little)
  - ▶ Enjoy playing with other children
  - ▶ Dress and undress with little help
  - ▶ Answer simple questions
  - ▶ Count 5 to 10 things
  - ▶ Tell stories
  - ▶ Enjoy jokes, rhymes and stories
  - ▶ Have a longer attention span
- 
- ▶ Follow simple instructions
  - ▶ Toilet themselves
  - ▶ Walk and run better
  - ▶ Understand when someone is hurt and comfort them
  - ▶ Follow simple rules and enjoy helping
  - ▶ Develop independence and social skills they will use for learning and getting on with others at preschool and school

### Seek further advice if your child:

- ▶ Isn't understood by others
- ▶ Has speech fluency problems or stammering
- ▶ Isn't playing with other children
- ▶ Isn't able to have a conversation
- ▶ Isn't able to go to the toilet or wash himself/herself

See your Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor.

## How can I make the most of this time?

### Love

- ▶ Children need to know they are loved and to be proud of who they are. Use words that help, not hurt. Say positive things to your child.
- ▶ You could go on special outings, such as to a petting zoo, art gallery, museum or bush walk.
- ▶ Older brothers and sisters can play and look at books with your younger child.

### Talk, Sing, Read

- ▶ Read books with simple text that your child can memorise or read.
- ▶ Let your child choose books from the library. Help him/her find books about their interests, e.g. dinosaurs, trains, dogs, etc.
- ▶ Look for books about events happening in their lives, such as starting school.
- ▶ Point out signs, food packets and other ways language and pictures are used when you shop.
- ▶ Children this age like to tell stories. You can help them make their own books with pictures.
- ▶ Take your child for a walk and tell him/her about their family and their history.

### Play

- ▶ Your child may like playing puzzles, board games, card games or 'I spy' with you.
- ▶ Caring for pets and planting seeds in pots and watching them grow teaches children about living things.
- ▶ Paper plates can be made into masks. Your child can cut out the shape for eyes, nose and mouth and glue things on or paint the mask.
- ▶ Offer your child objects that can be sorted into size or colour, such as clothes or pencils.
- ▶ Housework can be fun and your child can learn skills by helping to cook or putting things away into cupboards.

# Helplines

## 24 Hour Parent Helplines

Parent Line 13 20 55  
Karitane 9794 2350 or  
1300 227 464  
Tresillian 9787 0855 or  
1800 637 357

## Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline

8853 4999

## Domestic Violence Helpline

1800 65 64 63

## Mensline Australia

(24 hour help line for men) 1300 789 978

## Sane Australia Mental Health Helpline

1800 187 263

## Early Childhood Intervention Information Line

1300 656 865

Information about services in your area for children 0-6 years

# Useful Services

**Child and Family Health Nurses** at your local Early Childhood Health Centre provide information and support on child and family health. They may also run parent groups, make home visits and help you to find other services.

**Children's Services at your local Council** can tell you about childcare options, playgroups, toy libraries and other services near you. Your local library or community centre also has information about a range of groups and services in the area.

**Parenting Courses** may be run in your local area. These can help you increase your understanding about your children and their development and can help you build on the skills you already have as parents or carers of children.

**Community Health Centres** provide a range of free services for families, including counselling and speech therapy.

**The NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS)**, a state-wide service funded by NSW Health that provides free health information on early childhood/parenting and other related topics in up to 45 languages on its website ([www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au)).

# Useful Websites

[www.families.nsw.gov.au](http://www.families.nsw.gov.au)

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

[www.parenting.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parenting.nsw.gov.au)

[www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au) (information in many languages)

[www.parenting.sa.gov.au](http://www.parenting.sa.gov.au) (information in many languages)

[www.karitane.com.au](http://www.karitane.com.au)

[www.earlywords.info](http://www.earlywords.info) (information in many languages)

[www.tresillian.net](http://www.tresillian.net)

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

[www.kidsafensw.org](http://www.kidsafensw.org)

[www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)

[www.schools.nsw.edu.au](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au) (information in many languages)

[www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au) (information in many languages)



# LOVE Talk SING Read PLAY

## What if I don't speak English?

If you do not speak English you can still contact services. Ring the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50**, say where you are from and what language you speak (if you can say that in English it is easier, but if you can't they will work it out).

You may have to wait on the phone until they find an interpreter. The interpreter and you together will then phone the service. The interpreter and the service will talk together with you on the same phone line.

Interpreters must keep everything confidential. They are not allowed to tell anyone anything about you or your child, unless you say it is okay or your child is in danger.