

# Fact sheet: Helping your baby to talk



Every baby learns to talk by listening to people talk, by playing with sounds and words, and by talking to others. They begin to learn language skills from the moment they are born.

You can help your baby develop in the following ways:

## **Talking**

- Talk to your baby. Use slow, clear, simple talk to give baby a chance to begin picking out words.
- Use a variety of words, not just the names of things.
- Focus on single words, and words which are used in baby's life, such as nappy, cup, bath.
- Imitate any new sounds that your baby uses.
- Wait for a response. Even if your baby cannot use words, they can respond to you in squeals or whimpers.
- Pause often so that your baby has the chance to understand and talk back to you.

## **Show your baby you listen**

- Take it in turns when you play and talk with your baby.
- Listen to your baby. Show this by repeating baby's words.
- Look at your baby's face. Smile or reply to your baby's sounds.

## **Playing**

- Encourage your baby to play with other children by joining a play group or attending a PEEP session run by the Tomorrow Today Foundation
- Play close to your baby. Copy some of their actions, facial expressions or sounds, and show them new actions. Play hiding games, like peek-a-boo.
- Finger games, soft dolls and stuffed toys, balls, blocks and activity boards all help to develop baby's fingers and hands, as well as listening and learning skills.
- Build a collection of songs and rhymes. Singing songs helps your baby to learn.

## **Share books**

- Share books together for a few minutes a day.
- Choose books with large, bright pictures, and do plenty of pointing out of single objects, animals or people.
- It is free to join the Benalla Library. They have a great range of books suitable for babies.
- Tell your baby stories, and repeat favourites.

## **Step by step in learning**

Babies develop at different rates. Even so, before their first birthday most babies will:

- Enjoy watching your face, and show delight when you reply to and copy their chatter
- Understand their name, basic commands - such as 'no' - and the names of familiar objects
- Understand daily routines, such as bath and bed times
- Try to join in with action songs
- Eat a range of food tastes and textures, as well as chewing on a variety of foods
- Try to drink from a cup
- Attempt some real words and sound as though they are speaking your language.

## **When to seek help**

If you are worried about your child's language development, you may need to seek help from a speech pathologist, and particularly if:

- Your baby does not seem to listen to you, enjoy sounds or respond to them
- Your baby has difficulty sucking, chewing, swallowing or biting
- Your baby isn't using real words by 18 months
- Your toddler is frustrated by not being able to speak to others
- Your toddler has trouble understanding what you say
- Your toddler stutters
- Your toddler has an unusual voice, for example it sounds husky
- Your toddler isn't trying to make sentences by two and a half years.

## **More information**

More information is available at Benalla Health.

Phone (03) 5761 4500 and ask to speak to a speech pathologist.