

Communication & Language in

Pregnancy & The First Year



Fun Facts

- Your baby's brain begins to develop before they are born, and by the time they are 2 years old it's already 80% developed!
- Did you know that your baby starts to develop their hearing from around 16 weeks of pregnancy, and by 6 months into the pregnancy, they can recognise familiar voices and hear music too?
- Babies can respond from inside the womb. If you feel a little kick or wriggle when you are singing in the shower or listening to music, they are letting you know they hear you, and they are beginning to communicate with you. Your favourite music may even help soothe baby when they are born!
- Babies are born with a sense of rhythm & can even predict the next beat in a song.
- Between 2-4 months old, your baby begins to learn social skills. They do this by making eye contact, smiling, making sounds, giving you signals such as moving their arms and legs.
- By the age of 1, some children can recognise around 50 words.



Messages

“By talking to me, even when I am too young to understand your words, our bond will grow, and you will feel closer to me”

“Talking to me when I am inside your tummy helps me to recognise your voice, which gives me reassurance and comfort when I am born”

“When I am first born, I am fascinated by faces! By opening and closing your mouth, or spitting out your tongue out at me, you are playing with me. If you do it enough, I may even try to copy you!”

“By singing nursery rhymes to me, you are introducing me to unfamiliar words and sounds. You are helping me to understand where words begin and end in sentences and are even helping me get ready for school by helping me to learn rhyming words and repetition sounds!”

How you can help...




Talk to your bump! Find a time to read or sing to your baby. They will learn your voice, and if you rub your bump, you may even get a kick in response! If you do not feel you get enough time to be vocal, for example – if you live alone, you can voice your thoughts, read your book aloud, or even your social media posts!

When your baby kicks, respond by rubbing that same spot they kicked. If they kick again, repeat! This is your baby responding to you and learning communication skills!

When your baby is born, you can play with them by playing peek-a-boo, pulling faces, singing nursery rhymes, and doing tummy time. Remember to hold your baby close to you so that they can see you clearly.

Copy sounds that your baby makes. You will be encouraging more sounds and it is also the start of turn-taking and conversations.

Use 'singsong' voices - babies respond to 'baby talk' and they will listen to anything you have to say, even if you are just talking aloud about your day. Allow gaps in what you say, and you may encourage them to make a sound to fill that gap, which is your baby learning to respond to you.



Take some time each day to spend 1:1 with your child to look at books – you do not need to read the story; you can just look at the pictures – it all helps to build your babies language.

Encourage eye contact during activities – even during daily tasks such as nappy changes. This way you can help teach your child attention and listening skills.

Turn daily routines into language opportunities – can you sing during nappy changes? Can you name all items of clothing when getting your child dressed? What colour foods are on their plate at dinner times? All these opportunities can provide you with the chance to introduce new words to your child’s vocabulary and promote their communication & language skills.

As your child learns to sit up, encourage their skills further by picking nursery rhymes with actions. Not only will you promote their physical skills, but you will also promote their communication and language skills by helping them associate words with actions, such as waving alongside the words “bye-bye.”

Narrate your child’s play - describe what your child is doing, use simple repetitive phrases and pause between each phrase to allow your child to absorb what you are saying. For example, saying things like “you’ve got a yellow ball” or “you’re playing in the sand.” You will help your child associate words with items or with things they are doing. This is laying the foundation for speech.

1001 Critical Days

Do you know how important the first 1001 days of a child's life are? From the time a baby is conceived, through to their second birthday, their brain is rapidly growing and by the time they are 2 it will already be 80% developed! It has been said by professionals and leading child health experts that the care a child receives during this period helps influence and shape their future, more than any other time in their life.

To learn more about this incredible time in your children's development, visit the website below:

[Leicestershire.gov.uk/my-first-1001-days](https://leicestershire.gov.uk/my-first-1001-days)

Be sure to check the webpage for upcoming events across the county to learn more about the 1001 Critical Days whilst having fun with your baby!





Other Support and help available

Do you know if you are entitled to healthy start?

Visit the website below to find out if you could get help with food and milk:

● www.healthystart.nhs.uk

To see what help you are entitled to towards childcare visit:

● www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

For more information on your child's development as they grow towards school age, and for lots of other useful guidance, advice and information, make sure to visit the website below:

● healthforunder5s.co.uk

You can also now send a text message to talk with a health visitor if you have a question or are unsure about something. This service is called ChatHealth.

ChatHealth is a confidential text messaging service that enables parents of children aged 0-19 and children and young people (aged 11-19) to contact their local public health nursing (health visiting/school nursing) team.

In Leicestershire parents can text: 07520 615382

For more information on this visit the ChatHealth website:

● chathealth.nhs.uk/start-a-chat

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For further information on local groups and events please follow your local area's Facebook page:

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- f North West Leicestershire Family Hubs**
- f Hinckley & Bosworth Family Hubs**
- f Charnwood Family Hubs**
- f Harborough Family Hubs**
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