

Consider a chart highlighting what your baby does and what her actions mean. Or think about why your baby communicates and what she does to protest, request, call for attention, imitate and greet.

Activities to encourage listening:

- Put your baby down and sit on one side of your baby, and an unfamiliar person on the other. Take turns to talk. She is likely to turn towards the voice recognised most.
- While your baby is lying down, call her name and stroke her head. Then move to another side and do the same. She should move her eyes or head to your new direction. This helps to develop sound and sight co-ordination.
- Remember to vary pitch and tone as you talk.

Activities to encourage vocalisation:

- To encourage your baby to coo and babble, hold soft toys in front of her. When she responds with noise, reply to her. Once she realises making sounds pleases you, she will make more. This is excellent for future language development and learning to talk.
- Copy the noises your baby makes. e.g. tongue clicks, blowing raspberries and coos. This encourages taking turns between you and your baby.
- It is really important to give your baby enough time to talk to you. She wants to tell you things. You can do this by:

Watching your baby
Waiting for her to communicate
Responding to her noises.

Speech and language therapy department
Vaughan Building, Ruckhall Lane
Belmont, Hereford HR2 9RP
Tel: 01432 363975
www.wyevalley.nhs.uk
(Services, community services)

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call 01432 363975

Talking to your bump...

Information for midwives and mums-to-be



Babies can learn before birth!

Even before birth, your baby has the ability to learn information. This leaflet is aimed to help you think about ways of helping support your baby's development before her arrival!

In the sixth month of pregnancy, your baby's brain has developed so that she can begin to remember, experience, and learn.

Your baby is able to hear from around six months gestation. This means that she can hear music, Mum's voice, and the voices of those in the environment. When your baby is born she recognises and can be calmed by the sound of Mum, Dad and other familiar voices.

At around the same time, your baby can sense the way you are feeling by the hormones that you release, as well as the rate of your heart beat.

Bonding can begin before birth

It is well known how important bonding can be between parents and baby following birth. But bonding can also begin before birth, especially in the final two to three months of pregnancy.

What can I do to help bonding and development?

There are many things that can help bonding with your baby, most you probably do already without realising.

Activities to try:

Talking to your bump

- Use everyday activities to talk to your bump. The aim is to think about how you use interesting and varied tone and pitch, rather than what you are saying. This will help your baby develop good listening skills in the future.
- Asking Dad and close others to talk to your baby is a good way for her to recognise these familiar voices once she is born.
- You may notice your baby relaxes at the sound of familiar voices, and she becomes calmer and quieter when you are talking to her. Notice how your baby responds.

Singing and Music

- Babies love nursery rhymes and lullabies. Singing continues to develop listening skills and she will be able to respond to melodies around the five to six month stage of pregnancy.
- She will recognise these songs following birth, helping her feel calm and secure. Even theme tunes to television programmes you enjoy will be familiar to your baby.
- Think about how your baby responds to singing and gentle music.
- Listening to calm and soothing music also helps you feel relaxed. Your baby will also respond to how you are feeling.

Movement to Music

- Gently rocking and moving to music will help your baby develop good physical, movement skills and balance.

Involve all the family

- Involving the whole family will help them form an attachment to your baby before birth, and help you following arrival.

Following the New Arrival...

The bonding that you and your baby have been doing up to this point is continued following birth.

The first hour after she is born is especially important for you, Dad and baby. She needs skin to skin contact for familiar smell and sound.

From the start your baby will communicate with you. She will tell you if she is hungry, or happy by the way she cries, coos and smiles. She shows you that she is interested by looking and reaching.