

Oxford Craniofacial Unit

# ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE EARLY COMMUNICATION: BABIES AGED 3-6 MONTHS

## Information for parents and carers

From an early age your baby will be learning how to communicate with you. Here are some ideas to encourage your baby's early communication development.

### Talking with your baby

When your baby makes sounds they are learning about the different noises that they can create. These sounds will later become words.

When you hear your baby make a sound, copy them. Your attention and smiles encourage your baby to make more sounds. Also, your baby will learn to take turns at making sounds with you and, later, to copy your sounds. These are your baby's first conversations.

### Playing in front of a mirror

Babies love looking at themselves in mirrors. This is a great way for your baby to copy facial expressions, to learn about body movements and gestures (like pointing and waving), and to learn the parts of the body.

- Start by sitting up close to a mirror with your baby (not too close!).
- Point to the mirror and say "Look at the baby."
- Wave your baby's arm and say "Hi, baby."
- Ask "Where is baby's foot?", then wiggle your baby's foot and say "There's baby's foot."
- Go through all the parts of the body. Spend some time on their face, asking where baby's eyes, nose, ears and mouth are.
- Make different facial expressions; poke your tongue out at the mirror, smack your lips and blow raspberries. Encourage your baby to copy you.
- Other actions you and your baby can do in front of the mirror include clapping hands, lifting arms up, shaking or nodding the head and waving bye-bye.

## Movement games

Movement games are fun and they help your baby learn action words.

- When your baby is lying down, hold their hands and gently lift their arms as you say “Up go baby’s arms, up, up up”. Then lower your baby’s arms, saying “Down go baby’s arms, down, down, down”. Repeat with your baby’s legs, finishing with a kiss.
- Bouncing and rocking your baby will help them learn to balance. Whether your baby is sitting or lying in your lap, make sure they are securely supported. Sing a song as you gently bounce your baby (e.g. “Bounce, bounce, bounce [baby’s name], sitting on my lap” to the tune of ‘Row, row, row your boat’. “This is the way we bounce, bounce, bounce, etc.”).

## Further advice

If you have any concerns or questions about your child’s communication development, please speak to their Speech and Language Therapist.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

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