

Oxford Craniofacial Unit

**ACTIVITIES TO
ENCOURAGE EARLY
COMMUNICATION:
BABIES AGED
9-12 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.

Copy me

Babies enjoy copying others. Do an action and ask your baby to copy you. While they are learning to copy you, you can gently move their body to imitate your actions. Some actions you might do include:

- clapping or waving your hands
- nodding or shaking your head
- holding a toy and dropping it
- banging two toys together
- crawling fast or slow.

Mirror games

Babies of all ages love looking in the mirror. Some things that you can do with your baby as you look in a mirror include:

- making funny faces
- shaking or touching different body parts
- making simple sounds
- making different actions (e.g. shaking head, nodding head, clapping hands)
- putting a hat on and off.

Hide and seek games

You have probably noticed that your baby likes to find things. Collect containers or a wash cloth and place them in front of you. Take your baby's favourite toy and hide it under a container or wash cloth (make sure your baby sees you hide the toy). Ask your baby **'Where is it?'**. You can help your baby find the toy by guiding them to where it is hidden. Some great variations include:

- Hiding a toy that makes a sound (e.g. a clock).
- Putting a picture of someone in your family in front of your baby. Cover the picture with a scarf or cloth and ask your baby 'Where is xxx?'
- Hide toys in a pillowcase. Let your baby put their hand in the pillowcase to find a toy.
- When in the bath, hide your baby's toys under a wash cloth.

Action toys

Introduce toys that have an action. Toys such as spinning tops and 'push and go' cars are great. Pop-up toys also help your baby learn (e.g. Jack in the Box). Take turns pushing the button to make the toy jump up. Ask your baby: 'Where has it gone?'. Make sure you have their attention, then push the button.

Balls

Balls are simple toys to play with, which are a lot of fun. You can roll, push, throw or drop a ball. Take turns rolling a ball to each other. Be sure to talk to your baby about what you are doing (e.g. 'push', 'roll', etc.).

Body parts

Talk about your baby's body parts when you are dressing them or in the bath. Sing songs about body parts such as 'If you're happy and you know it touch your nose'.

Stacking

Stacking rings have a lot of potential for play. Different ways to play with a stacking ring include:

- putting the rings on and off
- throwing the rings
- putting the rings onto their fingers
- putting the rings in their mouth
- spinning the rings.

Remember to talk about what you are doing as you carry out each action (e.g. '**on**', '**off**', etc.).

Bubbles and balloons

Bubbles fascinate babies. Sit opposite your baby and blow bubbles. Try and catch the bubbles together, saying 'pop' each time you catch one. Wait for your baby to let you know that they want more bubbles. They might let you know by looking to you briefly, or pointing.

Balloons, like bubbles, are also a lot of fun. Some ideas for balloon play include:

- Blow up a balloon and let your baby feel the air coming out.
- Blow up a balloon and let it go.
- Hit a balloon to each other.

Musical instruments

Introduce simple musical instruments, such as a drum, xylophone or a shaker. Take turns playing the instruments.

- Play '**stop**' and '**go**', where you shake or bang to 'go' and stop suddenly in response to 'stop'.
- Vary the speed that you play the instrument. Go slow or very fast.
- Introduce musical instruments when you are singing songs. You can easily make your own instruments for your baby to play.
 - o **Shaker** – Fill a plastic bottle with rice, or a small plastic container with dry macaroni (be sure to secure the lid with tape, so that your baby cannot open the lid).
 - o **Drum** – An ice cream container (upside down) and a wooden spoon. Or you may like to try a saucepan and spoon.

Books

Your baby should be quite interested in looking at the pictures in simple books. Look for books with large clear pictures. Talk about the pictures with your baby, pointing to picture and telling your baby what it is. Ask your baby 'Where is the xxx?' and see if they will respond. Some other things to try include:

- Reading the same book over and over many times.
- Flap books (e.g. Spot the dog books), which are great (with a little help).
- Letting your baby hold the book and turn the pages.

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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