

Supporting Language & Literacy at 0-1 Month

Build brains, language & relationships with language nutrition

Your baby was born ready to communicate! They may not be talking yet, but they are definitely communicating. Your newborn's communication is mostly reflexive (crying and body postures) and are designed to let you know what they need, like, or don't like. They show interest with eye contact and by quieting down so that they can pay attention to something. Their favorite 'thing' to pay attention to is YOU!

You are your baby's first and best teacher and you have EVERYTHING you need to help their brains grow strong and their language skills to take off! Just as babies need good food nutrition to grow strong, healthy bodies, they need good language nutrition to grow strong, healthy brains.

That means the conversations you have with baby now are preparing their brains for all future learning, including learning to talk and how to read. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you talk with your baby:

- Language nutrition is good in any language but BEST in the language that you use best. Babies are born citizens of the world. They can detect and learn the sounds of any language. When having conversations with your baby, use the language that you are most comfortable with – even if it's not the language they will use in school.
- Early detection of hearing issues is key to your baby's healthy brain development. It's important to follow through with any recommendations from your baby's newborn hearing screening.
- Talk, read, sing, and play with your baby early and often using loving tones, exaggerated facial expressions, and gentle touch to build their brain, strengthen your relationship with them, and build their language and literacy skills.

Here are some ways your baby is communicating their wants and needs:

- Hears and responds to loud stimuli
- Sees close up and prefers looking at eyes and faces of family
- Recognizes parents' voices (prefers mother's voice beginning at about 30 weeks gestation)
- Uses reflexive communication such as crying and body postures (stiff/relaxed body/appendages) to communicate needs and physical state (hungry, need diaper change, overstimulated, discomfort)
- Shows interest with eye contact and quieting down (to attend to something)
- Makes sounds other than crying (coos, gurgling)

It is never too early to start reading to your baby as part of their regular routine. Here are some suggested book titles for you to enjoy!

- *Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth* by Oliver Jeffers
- *I Love You Like No Otter* by Rose Rossner
- *Welcome: A Mo Willems Guide for New Arrivals* by Mo Willems
- *Bitty Brown Babe* by Deborah Le Falle
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr