

Ideas to develop and encourage communication efforts with a young baby

- ❖ *Be sure the environment is visually stimulating for your baby. Not too many things to look at, but enough to insure interest and curiosity.*
- ❖ *Spend time looking into your baby's face and encouraging your baby to look at you. This is the beginning of a skill to learn to focus on your mouth as you talk. Your baby needs to see different mouth postures in order to know what to do with his own mouth, eventually for speech.*
- ❖ *Sometimes looking in a mirror together encourages imitation of different mouth postures.*
- ❖ *Play sound games with your baby. Peek-a-boo early on is fun! Especially just to hear the sounds.*
- ❖ *Make the environment rich with sound, such as playing different kinds of music or just allowing time for natural sound.*
- ❖ *Connect sounds with the sources. For example, make animal sounds, then ask, "What sound does a cow make?" Then again say, "Moooo!" Don't expect your child to join in the sound play for several months, but usually before twelve months, she will try to imitate some sounds.*
- ❖ *Have different sound producing toys and objects available so that your baby begins to understand there are different sounds in the environment.*
- ❖ *Call your child by name consistently. If he does not respond, attract his attention with a desirable noise, then call his name again.*
- ❖ *Encourage mouth exploration by providing different safe materials to put in the mouth, such as teething beads, sucking toys, wet wash clothes, etc. Giving different food substances, when age appropriate will also help with this. While bottle feeding or nursing, giving liquids of different thickness, such as water and juice vs. milk is good. Remember that while eating, your baby is developing mouth muscles that will eventually be used for speech.*
- ❖ *Gently massaging lips, cheeks, lips and chin helps draw awareness of these oral structures.*
- ❖ *Sometimes tapping the tongue to rhythmical music increases tongue movement. Sometimes stroking the tongue encourages the child to make a groove in the middle or to move it sideways or upward.*
- ❖ *Encourage mouth posture imitation by looking in mirrors together or facing each other at close proximity. Start by imitating what she does, then try to model a posture for her to imitate.*
- ❖ *Encourage imitation of sounds. At first, imitate sounds your baby makes. Then encourage him to imitate sounds you make. This can be encouraged, by imitating his sounds first then slightly changing that sound.*

- ❖ *React to your baby's sounds as though there is meaning. Listen carefully, then when she is done, say some thing like "Oh you have a lot to say. Tell me more." Or "Wow! Did that really happen?"*
- ❖ *When speaking with your baby, use a high-pitched voice with short simple sentences. Talk more slowly and repeat what you say. This is known as 'child-directed speech.' It is usually natural when talking to both babies and pets!*

*Have fun exploring with and enjoying
your new baby!*

Form created by Kate Ross, MS, CCC-SLP:2004. Developed from a book entitled: Communication Skills in Children with Down Syndrome: A Guide for Parents, By Libby Kumin, Ph.D., CCC-SLP. Woodbine House; Maryland: 1994.

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