

Antenatal

Let's talk: Before I'm Born

The first 1001 days of your baby's life is a crucial time for your little one's brain development. This starts from the moment they are conceived. Did you know the baby's brain grows 17-fold in the last 20 weeks of pregnancy?

They will start becoming sensitive to the sound of their surroundings and it is a great time to start introducing sounds and speech to your child.

I can...

- Communicate right from the start, so talking to me helps my brain develop
- React to light and sounds during the second trimester.
- Start to recognise mum's voice from 16 to 20 weeks and will communicate through movement.
- Use my vocal chords. By 12 weeks I start to practice silent crying so I can communicate with you when I am born.
- Suck my thumb from around 23-25 weeks. This helps to strengthen the muscles in my face and mouth. This is important for feeding and making my first sounds

You can help me by...

- Talking and reading to me. I love to hear familiar voices.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes. I respond to the rhythm of music and familiar stories and rhymes.
- Thinking about what I look like. This will help you become more comfortable to communicate with me when I am in your tummy. Try giving me a nickname and see how I respond.
- Noticing times when I move and respond by talking to me or stroking your tummy.



0 - 6 months

The first few years of a child's life are key to the development of speech, language and communication skills.

Your baby will enjoy interacting with you from day 1.

I can...

- Make cooing sounds such as "ooo," "gah" and "ahh".
- Start to smile at you when you talk to me
- Start to chuckle softly
- Make throaty or gurgling sounds
- Get excited or smile when I see you

I will then move on to:

- Making grunting, growling or other deep toned sounds
- Looking in the direction of your voice when out of sight
- Turn to look in the direction of loud noises.
- Make sounds like "da," "ga," "ka," and "ba"
- Copying the sounds you make by repeating the same sound back to you.



You can help me by...

- Taking turns with your baby when they are making cooing and gurgling sounds.
- Singing to your baby repetition of songs and lullaby's helps your baby to learn and listen.
- Reading simple books to your baby, they will enjoy being close to you and listening to you read.
- Laying or sit on the floor with baby when they are playing.
- Facing your baby when speaking to them

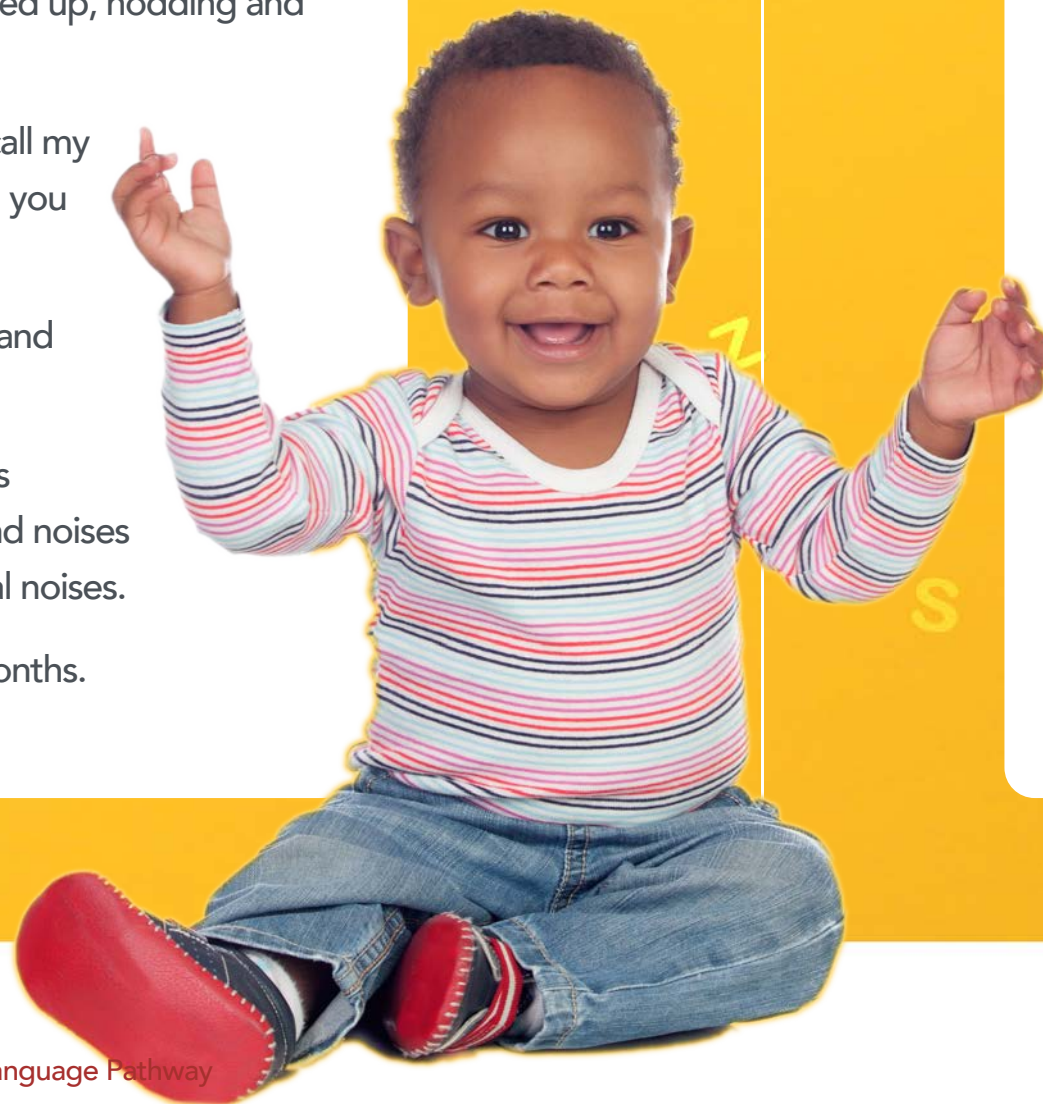
6 - 12 months

Leading health experts around the world agree the first 1001 days of a child's development influence a child's future more than any other time in their life.

The environment I am exposed to has the most significant impact on my development. At 6 months, I am keen for you to help me develop my communication skills and start to communicate using noise with you.

I can...

- Show you what I need using gestures such as reaching out my arms to be picked up, nodding and shaking my head.
- Turn and look at you when you call my name and understand 'no' when you say it in a low, deep voice.
- Look to where you are pointing and respond to your gestures.
- Start babbling by putting sounds together and copying sounds and noises you make like brumm and animal noises.
- Use some single words by 12 months.



You can help me by...

- Sitting face to face with me and make eye contact. This helps me pay attention to you and learn to listen. Play peekaboo games; use your hands to hide your face, saying things like 'Where are you? There you are!' or 'Peek-a-boo I see you'.
- Using actions that go with what you're saying, like waving when you say 'Hello.' Doing this again and again will help me learn to understand and use the words and actions.
- Using sounds and actions to go with what I am doing. You can say 'mmm' or 'yummy' when I am eating and rub your belly.
- Talking about what I am doing or what I can see. For example, 'Oh, see the dog,' or 'Wow, she's jumping.'
- Singing songs and nursery rhymes and make music together. We can use spoons and saucepans as drums. Say 'your turn' 'my turn' to help me learn to listen and take turns.



12 -18 months

Children learn about themselves, others and the world through play.

At 12 months children begin start to travel independently and can move to objects they enjoy. You can help me develop my language and a secure attachment by interacting with me throughout the day and when I am playing.

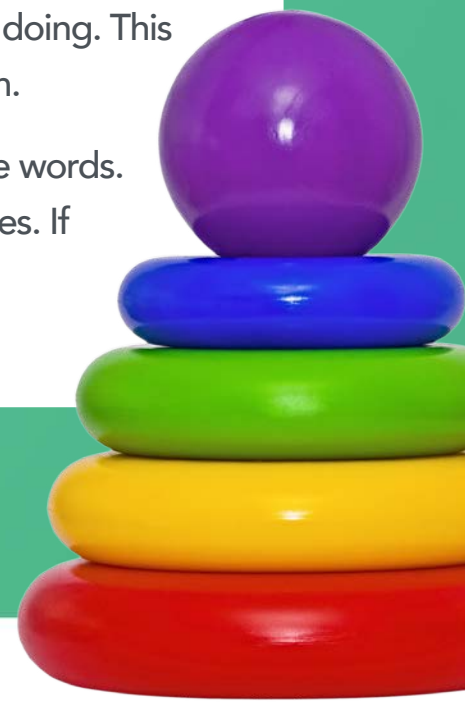
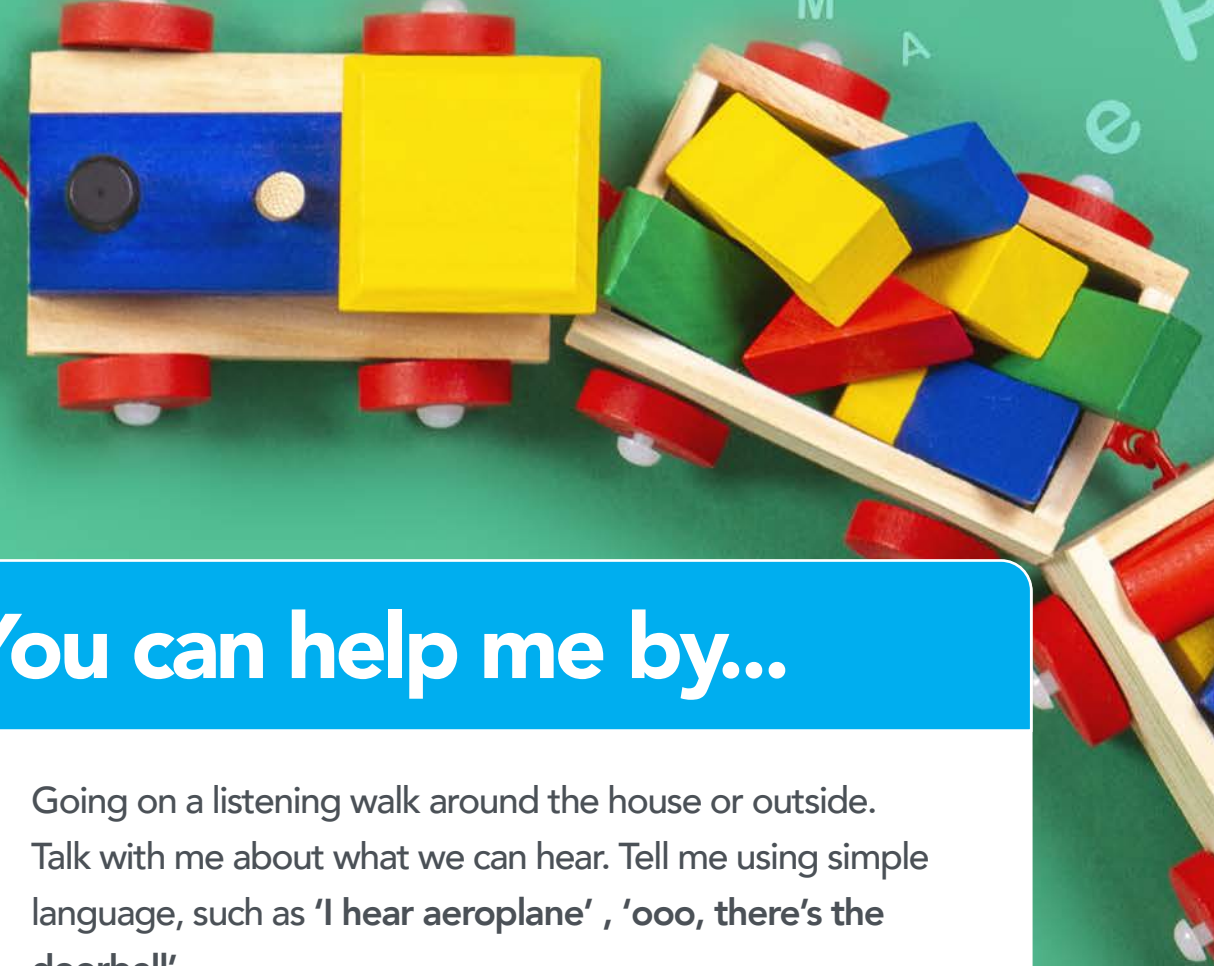
I can...

- Play with a favourite toy or object for a short time. I love it when you join in with me.
- Point to familiar objects in a book when you ask me to.
- Use single words to ask for things and might start to put two words together, such as '**more bubbles**'
- Join in with familiar nursery rhymes and songs by copying the actions, I may say some of the words too.
- Use '**no**' correctly.



You can help me by...

- Going on a listening walk around the house or outside. Talk with me about what we can hear. Tell me using simple language, such as '**I hear aeroplane**' , '**ooo, there's the doorbell**'.
- Singing nursery rhymes and songs with me. Remember to sit face to face and use facial expression to match what is happening.
- Playing with me, let me take the lead and join in my play. We can build a tower and knock it down, put teddy or baby to sleep.
- Talking with me about I can see and what I am doing. This helps me learn what I see and how to use them.
- Repeating what I say and add one or two more words. This will help me learn to make longer sentences. If I say "**Doggie**," you say "**Yes, big doggie.**"



18 - 24 months

Children begin to use words and join words at 18-24 months.

I still enjoy playing with you and understand more than I can say which can leave me feeling frustrated. I might cry and throw myself to the ground if I cannot tell you what is bothering me

I can...

- Listen to one thing at a time, so it may not look like I am always listening to you
- Start to point to body parts when you ask me to such as 'show me your nose'.
- Follow simple instructions and can understand some action words like 'jump' and 'clap'.
- Begin to combine words in to simple sentences such as 'want milk', 'more bubbles', 'daddy car'.



You can help me by...

- Giving me one instruction at a time, as lots of information can be confusing
- Showing me pictures in books, real objects and use gestures to help me understand the words when you are talking about them
- Talking about what you are doing. Name items and talk about what they look like. Give me the words for things I am pointing at
- Sharing the same stories and rhymes with me over and over again, as I then become familiar with what comes next
- Giving me time to think about what I am going to say rather than answering for me.



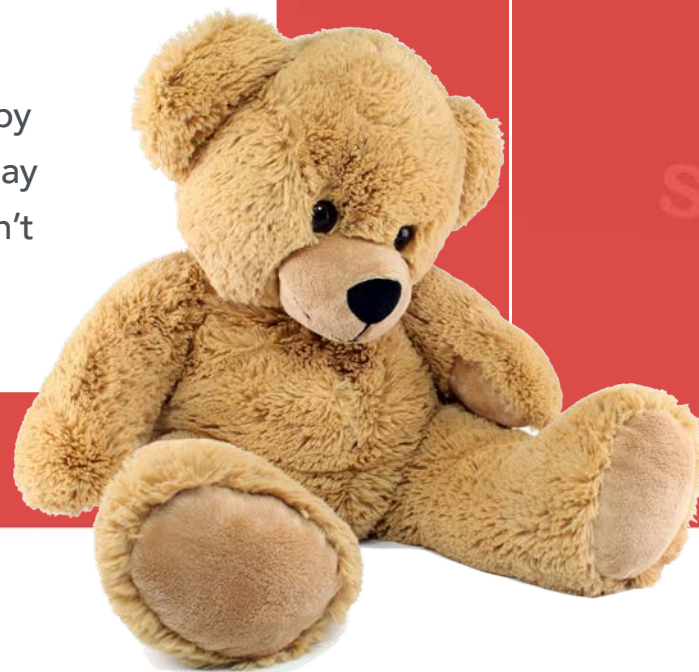
2 - 3 years

Children with healthy brains that have been stimulated have formed one thousand trillion neural connections.

I stay interested in objects and play with toys i enjoy for a little bit longer. I am still learning through play and enjoy playing on my own and can take part in a simple turn taking activity with an adult e.g. passing the ball to and fro with an adult .

I can...

- Play or respond to you, but I can't do both at the same time. Saying my name can help me to focus.
- Follow longer instructions such as '**give the cup to teddy**'.
- Join 2-3 words together and use a range of action words. I am starting to ask questions.
- Get frustrated when we don't understand each other.
- Be understood most of the time by people who know me well, but may not always be understood as I can't use all my speech sounds yet.



You can help me by...

- Having special time together to share toys, books, songs and rhymes and joining in with my play. Talking and playing is fun and it's better with two people!
- Not asking me lots of questions. Comment on what I'm doing. Instead of saying '**What are you doing?**' you could say '**You're kicking the ball**'. This helps me to link the word label to what I'm playing with or the action I'm doing.
- Allowing me to express my feelings and telling me what you see such as '**I see you are excited**', '**you look angry**'
- Giving me simple instructions, without too many words
- Reading 'around' a book, talking about the pictures and labelling the objects and actions for me.



3 - 4 years

Your 3 to 4 year-old child will continue to grow and develop in many ways in this year.

Your child will start asking lots of questions. "Why are the clouds white? Why do dogs have fur?" Questions, questions, and more questions! While it may be annoying at times, asking questions is a normal developmental milestone.

I can...

- Listen to longer stories, asking and answering simple questions about a storybook we have just shared.
- Use sentences of up to 5 words and link sentences together, such as "I like red cars and I got a new truck"
- Talk about things that have already happened or are going to happen, although I don't always get the words exactly right, I might say "I jump-ded in the puddles", "I going park tomorrow".
- Play make-believe with my teddies or with my friends. I might pretend to be a fairy or a racing car driver, or on a pirate ship.
- Be understood by most people I talk to but still find some sounds hard to say.



You can help me by...

- Using interesting faces and voices when we talk to help me pay attention to what you are saying. I also like to look at pictures, photos or objects of what we're talking about to help keep me interested in listening. Acting out stories with puppets is fun too.
- Having special time together to talk about the day. This will help my memory skills. It also helps me learn to talk about things I cannot see and events that happened in the past.
- Talking with me about the order things happen in, e.g. 'This morning we walked to the park. First we went on the swings. Then we fed the ducks. After that you fell in a puddle.'
- Letting me take the lead when we play together. Talk about what I am saying and doing rather than asking me lots of questions. This shows you are listening and interested and helps my language too.
- Taking me to lots of different places so I can talk about new experiences such as a trip to the park, going on a bus, taking me shopping with you.



4 - 5 years

Your child is becoming curious and inquisitive and able to hold a conversation with you and others.

There vocabulary and thought process is developing enabling them to answer simple questions easily and logically and express there feelings better.

I can...

- Pay attention really well now, and I am starting to be able to 'listen' and 'do' at the same time.
- Understand more complicated instructions and answer harder questions. For example when you ask me 'what do we do when we are cold?' I can tell you 'I need my coat'.
- Understand simple jokes and I am developing a sense of humour.
- Talk in full sentences now but I've still got lots to learn. For example, I might say 'mouses' instead of 'mice'. I can tell you stories and sequences of events and I am asking a lot more questions like 'why?' and 'how?'
- My speech sounds are mostly clear, but when there are two sounds together I may miss one out. I might say 'pane' instead of 'plane', 'pider' instead of 'spider'. I might continue to have difficulty with 'th' and 'r' sounds until I am about 7 years old.



You can help me by...



- Chatting to me throughout the day about what we are doing. For example, if we are out grocery shopping, talk about what we are buying, how much it costs, what we will use it for and so on. Remember to keep your language fairly simple, and pause to give me a chance to answer.
- Paying attention when I talk to you, giving me lots of praise and showing me you understand.
- Teaching me new words. Tell me the words for things I may not have seen or heard of before and show me how to use them in a sentence.
- Practice giving two and three step directions. Use words like, "Go to your room, and get me your book."
- Sharing books with me. Talk about what we can see in the pictures, let me try to re-tell the story, talk about what might happen next.

