Your Child is Talking to Learn
Milestones for Speech and Language Development 2 to 5 Years

Age 2 to 3rd birthday
• Combines words in 2-3 word sentences, such as “me do it.”
• Follows simple directions, such as “put the teddy-bear to bed.”
• Answers simple questions, such as “what’s your name?” “which one is the big doll?”
• Can put a toy “in,” “on,” under” when asked
• Answers simple questions about objects, such as “which one do we eat?”
• Is able to sit and attend to a book for a few minutes

When to be concerned:
• Does your child show frustration when trying to talk?
• Is your child’s speech difficult for you to understand?
• Does your child not yet put 2 words together?

Age 3 to 4th birthday
• Follows 2 related directions, such as “Close the book and give it to me.”
• Tells first and last name
• Understands questions about a picture story, such as “where did the bunny go?”
• Reasons – answers “what do you do when you’re hungry/cold?”
• Tells a short story, such as “Two kids played ball.”
• Sentences are usually 3 and 4 words long

When to be concerned:
• Does your child not use complete sentences?
• Does your child stutter?
• Does your child not seem to be able to follow directions?

Age 4 to 5th birthday
• Follows 3 related directions, such as “Get your crayons, make a picture and give it to the baby.”
• Speaks sounds accurately except perhaps for “l, r, th, ch, sh”
• More reasoning – answers questions, such as “What do you do when you are sleepy/thirsty?” or “What should you do if you hurt yourself?”
• Can tell you in detail about their day
• Can show you “top,” “bottom,” and several colours
• Can explain the meaning of words

When to be concerned:
• Does your child not use complete sentences?
• Does your child stutter?
• Does your child not seem to be able to follow directions?
Speech and language abilities are important for preparing children to play, learn and get along with others. Children with strong speech and language skills are better prepared for school and are often more successful learners.

First 3 months of life
- Becomes startled at loud noises
- Is soothe by calm, gentle voices
- Likes to cuddle and enjoys being held
- Cries, gurgles, grunts, says “ah”
- Sucks and swallows well

When to be concerned:
- Shows no reaction to sound?

4 months to 6 months
- Watches your face with interest when you talk
- Tries to “talk” to you by cooing or babbling
- Enjoys “talking” with you, smiles at you
- Coos and squeals for attention
- Has a special cry when hungry

When to be concerned:
- Are any of the behaviours absent?

6 months to 1st birthday
- Understands some common words when used with gestures, such as “bye, bye,” “up,” “give me” and own name
- Tries to say sounds and words, such as “ba, ba,” “na, na”
- Tries to “sing” along with radio/TV
- Laughs and may imitate a cough or sound

When to be concerned:
- Are you concerned about how little your child babbles or plays?
- Does your child get lots of ear infections?

Age 1 to 18 months
- Babbles – sounds like sentences
- Understands simple questions/statements, such as “Where is your nose?”, “Give me.”
- Says a few words, though not necessarily clearly
- Nods “yes” and shakes head for “no”
- Enjoys rhythm and likes to “dance” to music

When to be concerned:
- Does your child not talk at all?
- Is your child not sociable?

18 months to 2nd birthday
- Says some 2-word sentences, such as “More milk,” “All gone,” “Me go”
- Asks for a cookie or toy
- Understands “Where is mommy/daddy?”
- Understands simple directions, such as “Get your coat”
- Understands more words than can speak/say

When to be concerned:
- Does your child use more gestures than words?
- Are you concerned about your child’s ability to talk and/or understand?

Early detection of difficulties at any age can make learning to talk easier. If your child shows any of the warning signs listed for his or her age group, please contact:

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