TALK WITH ME BABY

14

Easy Ways to Improve Language Nutrition

TALKING WITH YOUR BABY MAKES YOUR BABY SMARTER
Mom, Dad, look at your sweet little one.

Did you know that your baby’s brain is learning how to talk long before he is able to say a word? His brain literally “lights up” or activates with excitement with every word you say. Just by talking to him, you are helping your baby learn how to use words and sentences to communicate in his world. In fact, you actually make your baby smarter just by talking to him.

You are really his very first teachers.

The words you use to talk with your baby are stored in a very special place in her brain so that when she is able to talk, those words will be available to her over her lifetime. She won’t be able to use them for a while, but, make no mistake, they are there for her. So, we want to help you talk to your baby as often as you can every day. Talk about her, talk about you, talk about your family and your life. You can tell her your thoughts and your feelings. You can tell her anything. It’s really easy. We want your words to become your baby’s window into her new world!

Here are 14 easy ways to talk more with your baby.
1. Begin talking with your baby before he or she is born. Your baby can hear your voice and by the time your baby is born, he or she is already equipped to learn language.

2. Your baby begins to learn language while still in utero. Fetuses hear and respond to sounds. Once your baby is born, your baby’s brain is forming connections with every word you say even though he or she cannot talk yet. This is because the brain in the first three years of life grows very rapidly.

3. Talking with your baby makes your baby smarter by building your baby’s brain. Like a house, your baby needs a strong foundation for future learning to be built upon. Language provides this strong foundation.

4. Talk with your baby in the home language, or the language you are most comfortable using to ensure rich language exchanges. The home language is the language you would say “I love you” and the language you are most fluent in.

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5. Talk with your baby using parentese. Parentese consists of unique speech features including a high pitch, melodic tone with varied intonation and elongated vowels.

6. Repeat words and short simple sentences over and over again to help your baby learn vocabulary.

7. When you talk with your baby, use correct punctuation and grammar. Language that does not follow grammatical rules does not help your baby learn the rules of the language.

8. Ask your baby questions and encourage your baby to answer with coos, babbles, and eventually words. The serve and return in language interactions makes a difference in your baby’s brain.
9. Narrate daily activities to the baby, such as changing diapers, feeding, getting dressed or ready for bedtime. Describe to your baby what you and your baby are feeling and doing.

10. Respond to your baby’s lead. Tune into what your baby looks at and expressions and babbles made by your baby.

11. Encourage others who spend time with your baby to talk with your baby, including babysitters, daycare workers, hospital and clinic staff, friends, and grandparents.

12. Talk with your baby as much as you can, whenever your baby is awake. Every word your baby hears is important to your baby.
THE MOST EFFECTIVE ACTION PARENTS CAN TAKE TO INCREASE THEIR BABY’S EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE IS TO TALK WITH THEIR BABIES.

MAKE YOUR PROMISE TO TALK WITH YOUR BABY.

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Introduce new vocabulary through singing, reading telling stories, or as you go about daily activities. Your baby’s brain forms a connection for each word he or she hears.

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Avoid use of TV or music recordings for language development. Language interactions between adult-child make a difference and TV and recordings to not have the same benefit.
ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Language nutrition for all babies in Georgia
A powerful cross-sector coalition is bridging the word gap by bringing language nutrition to each and every child in Georgia. Georgia’s Talk With Me Baby (TWMB) aims to transform parents and caregivers into conversational partners, providing early language exposure to babies in order to nourish critical brain development required for higher learning. By integrating language nutrition coaching as a core competency across large-scale workforces of nurses, WIC nutritionists, and early education professionals, TWMB systematically strengthens and reinforces the capacity of all parents and caregivers in Georgia to deliver vital language nutrition to their children, starting at birth.

Early language exposure is critical for brain development
The best predictor of a baby’s future academic achievements is not parental income, level of parent education, or ethnicity, but rather the number of words spoken to the baby and the amount of time spent in active engagement from birth to 3 years of age. Just as food nourishes a growing child’s body, language interactions nourish a child’s brain. Research indicates that both quantity and quality of language are essential for vocabulary development, which is predictive of third grade reading proficiency; children who can’t read to learn by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. Currently, two-thirds of Georgia’s children are not achieving third grade reading proficiency.

Coaching parents to be teachers
The goal of Talk With Me Baby is to ensure that all children born in Georgia receive essential language nourishment so that Georgia’s children have a strong foundation for cognitive ability, social-emotional competency, school readiness, educational achievement; and ultimately lifelong success. By 2017, TWMB will reach all newborns in the Atlanta metro region, where 61,000 births occur each year. By 2020, access to language nutrition will extend across Georgia, reaching the 130,000 babies born each year. Two aims shape the rapid scale-up of TWMB:

1. To establish a wide-reaching public health, clinical and early childhood education workforce that has the capacity to train parents and caregivers to talk with their babies by demonstrating dynamic language transactions
2. To dramatically increase the number of language rich environments both at home and in early childhood education.

Training workforces to touch all children in Georgia
By training nurses, WIC nutritionists and preschool educators, TWMB utilizes the everyday environments in which families, infants, and young children interact with health care and early childhood education systems. This integrated model can provide language nutrition to almost all children in Georgia because more than 99% of expectant/new parents and their children are seen by nurses, more than 80% of low-income expectant/new parents and their children are seen by WIC nutritionists, and about one-third of children ages birth to three attend early childhood education programs.

A collaborative campaign with an integrated strategy
Due to the scale of this work, TWMB is guided collectively by a team of leaders from the Georgia Department of Public Health and Department of Education, Emory University’s School of Nursing and Department of Pediatrics, the Marcus Autism Center at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, the Atlanta Speech School’s Rollins Center for Language and Literacy, and Get Georgia Reading – Georgia’s Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

Capitalizing on the strengths, resources, and statewide reach of these partners, TWMB is aggressively implementing capacity building strategies early in the developmental period to collectively address the word gap. With initial investments from the United Way of Greater Atlanta, and investments from each of the guiding organizations, TWMB is:

1) Designing and implementing a curriculum to train OB/GYN, labor and delivery neonatal and pediatric nurses, midwives and WIC nutritionists; the curriculum is aimed at understanding the importance of language nutrition and acquiring the skills to coach parents on this critical behavior;

2) Providing universal access to preschool educators to effectively teach language and vocabulary skills;

3) Maximizing technology to design and deliver reinforcements and reminders for parents to deliver language nutrition with their babies; and

4) Evaluating the efficacy of the language nutrition intervention using a comprehensive logic model and research plan including randomized clinical trial and measurement of the factors leading to powerful collaborations and collective impact.